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Official Records

4th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Karzai: Nelson Mandela once described his country's transition to democracy as a long journey to freedom comprising many milestones, each a realization of new opportunities for him and his nation. We, the Afghan people, started our journey to stability and democracy almost three years ago. I am delighted to report that, 18 days from today, our people will go to the polls for the first time to elect their President, marking the most significant milestone in our journey.

As the presidential elections will mark the end of the transitional period set forth in the historic Bonn Agreement, I would like to outline some of Afghanistan's achievements over the past three years and discuss our challenges.

Much has changed in my country, but no change is more visible than the confidence of the Afghan people in the future of our country. We have seen that confidence in the return of more than 3.5 million refugees who are now rebuilding their lives. We have seen that confidence in the enthusiasm of families who are sending their boys and girls to school, rebuilding their homes and setting up their businesses. And we have seen that confidence in the enthusiasm of 10.5 million Afghans who have registered to vote in the upcoming elections.

Earlier this year, the Constitutional Loya Jirga adopted an enlightened Constitution establishing a democratic Islamic republic. It guarantees equal rights and equal protection for all citizens — men and women. The vision of the Constitutional Loya Jirga is becoming a reality. Approximately 42 per cent of the registered voters are women, and women will make up at least 25 per cent of our future parliament. Our Constitution also guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

During the past year, we enacted the election law, established the necessary mechanism to organize and manage elections and completed voter registration, and we are now preparing to hold presidential and parliamentary elections. Thanks to the cooperation of our two brotherly neighbours, Pakistan and Iran, hundreds of thousands of Afghans still living in those countries will also participate in the election.

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In partnership with the international community, we have intensified our efforts to rebuild our national security institutions. Today, there are 15,000 national army soldiers and nearly 30,000 national police officers providing security to our citizens. We are grateful to the thousands of International Security Assistance Force and coalition troops that are assisting our security forces. We have also taken steps towards disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating private militias. Nearly all of the heavy weapons have been collected from the city of Kabul, and thousands of former combatants have been disarmed in various parts of the country.

We have continued the reconstruction of our country. At the Berlin conference this year, the international community renewed its commitment to rebuilding Afghanistan. The generous pledges that we received in Berlin will be committed to national reconstruction and development programmes that will create economic opportunities for our citizens and will further promote economic growth throughout the region. Eradicating poverty and meeting the educational and health needs of our citizens will continue to remain among our top priorities. We will continue to focus on building our roads to re-establish Afghanistan as the land bridge for transcontinental trade. Upon completion of Afghanistan's ring road, every major Central Asian capital will be less than 32 hours from the Persian Gulf and the port of Karachi.

While our achievements are significant, we continue to face challenges. Terrorism remains one of our main challenges. The remnants of terrorism continue to attack our citizens and to threaten our security. As long as terrorism continues to exist in our region, neither Afghanistan nor our neighbours nor, indeed, the rest of the world can be safe. Eliminating the remnants of terrorism in Afghanistan and in the region requires not only continued support from the international community, but also strong and sincere commitment from other countries in the region. To stop the movement of terrorists across borders, the countries in the region must cooperate closely.

The cultivation and trafficking of narcotics is another major challenge to Afghanistan and to the rest of the world. Drug profits finance terrorism and undermine our efforts to build a healthy and legitimate economy. Afghanistan is fully committed to eliminating this menace. However, we cannot succeed without the strong partnership of the international community.

Poverty remains another serious challenge. Even though we have made considerable progress over the past three years, we are still one of the poorest countries. We still have the second-highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world, and we have one of the highest illiteracy rates. Very few Afghans have access to safe drinking water, and only 6 per cent of the Afghan population has reliable access to electricity.

Our achievements have not come without a cost. During the elections for the Constitutional Loya Jirga, terrorists did everything to disrupt the process, including bombing an elementary school and killing more than 20 children. During the registration for the elections, terrorists showed their desperation by intensifying their attacks. They bombed vehicles carrying women registration workers, killed civilians who carried registration cards and bombed religious schools, killing children.

Those attacks have not stopped our people from passing one milestone after another. The valuable role of the international community has been crucial to our success. Nations from different continents with different cultures and religions have come together to help rebuild Afghanistan. That is a clear example of cooperation among civilizations. On behalf of the Afghan people, I thank all the nations that have supported us with their troops and resources, especially the United States of America, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, Spain, France and Turkey. We are most grateful to the United Nations for the commitment and engagement of United Nations agencies and employees during the past three years. We especially appreciate the personal commitment and dedication of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan; his Deputy Special Representative, Mr. Jean Arnaud; and his Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, whose wisdom and leadership have guided us throughout the journey.

Afghanistan is on the road to recovery from the devastation of more than two decades of war. Much has been accomplished in the past three years. Yet establishing a stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan requires sustained and collaborative efforts by the Afghans, by our neighbours and by the international community. We, the Afghan people, will do our share. Working together for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan not only is a good example of successful international cooperation, but will also contribute to regional prosperity and global security.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen (Finland): In today's globalized world, security and prosperity are inseparable. There can be no lasting peace in any part of the world when millions of people suffer every day from deprivation, poverty, armed conflicts and terrorism. There is no human dignity when even the most basic human rights of millions of people are violated every day. There is no equality as long as there is discrimination because of gender, race or beliefs. There is no fairness when international and domestic rules favour the rich and powerful and oppress the poor and weak.

We, the family of nations, cannot remain on the sidelines. We need multilateral tools to meet the challenges of a globalized world. We must develop and enhance our multilateral institutions. This applies especially to the United Nations, whose position in promoting peace and development is unique.

Member States have given the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The members of the Security Council — and especially its permanent members — must display a common will and compromise on narrowly defined national interests. The other nations must then show support for the Security Council's position and its decisions.

Before the war in Iraq, however, the international community failed. Conflicting national interests prevailed over common will. There was not enough commitment to act within the boundaries of Security Council resolutions. Some nations resorted to the use of force, which was not in accordance with international law.

But now we must turn our eyes and energies to the future. We need to restore security and stability in Iraq so that the building of democracy and prosperity can begin in earnest. Finland is participating in the training of Iraqi police forces and we have decided to contribute €1 million for security for staff members of the United Nations system working in Iraq.

There is no sustainable alternative to multilateralism. The international community must recognize its collective responsibility. We must be able to intervene and prevent situations in which human rights are seriously violated.

We cannot afford to let the Darfur situation get out of hand. The United Nations and the international community must be able to act in time, effectively and as long as needed. I thank the Secretary-General for his promise of action today.

Globalization could and should be a force for a brighter future for all people. However, globalization as we experience it today falls far short of this promise and is ethically and politically unsustainable. To implement the Millennium Declaration, we need to make globalization more fair and attentive to people's needs and aspirations. This requires more coherence, closer and better international cooperation and stronger democratic States that work for fairness at home and abroad.

We must act without delay in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We have agreed on additional resources, we have agreed on local ownership and we have agreed on good governance. Let us deliver on these promises. The poor of the world cannot wait. We must make the 0.7 per cent target on development assistance a reality. We need to give open-minded consideration to new and innovative proposals for additional development funding, including international taxation.

One concrete indication of the desire to implement the Millennium Declaration is the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. The Commission has drafted numerous recommendations which the United Nations system should study before the review of the Millennium Declaration next autumn. Tanzania and Finland will present an initiative for this session of the General Assembly to deal with the Commission's recommendations in the United Nations.

The United Nations has a key role today and tomorrow in promoting peace, security, economic prosperity, social welfare, human rights and the rule of law. Finland gives full support to the broad reform of the United Nations that is now underway. The time is ripe for a reform of the Security Council and the expansion of its membership so that it better corresponds to today's world. We also need to vitalize the General Assembly and give the Economic and Social Council the role envisaged in the United Nations Charter.

I hope that when we meet here at United Nations Headquarters a year from now, we can proudly note that we have taken concrete steps towards a better world. This is a responsibility that all of us share and I know it requires a lot of work from all of us, but, dear colleagues, let us do it.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will hear a statement by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chissano (Mozambique): Mr. President, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Mozambique, I would like to congratulate you upon your election as President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We are delighted to see a distinguished son of Africa in the stewardship of the highest organ of the United Nations, which shows the confidence the world places on your experience, wisdom and proven skills. Let me also pay a well-deserved tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia, for successfully having presided over one of the most productive sessions of the General Assembly.

I wish to commend the Secretary-General for his continued devotion to the fundamental ideals of our Organization, stressing the importance of multilateralism, with a view to addressing the global challenges before us, such as to eradicate poverty, hunger, pandemic diseases and illiteracy and to bring about development, peace and stability.

I speak before this Assembly at a time when Mozambique is preparing to conduct its third multi-party general elections, to be held on 1 and 2 December 2004.

Having had the privilege of leading my country through many challenges, moving from war to peace, from destruction to reconstruction, from economic decline to economic growth and development, I felt I should allow other elected sons and daughters of Mozambique the opportunity to take up the noble task of conducting the affairs of the nation, leading to further gains. This is therefore my very last attendance of a session of the General Assembly in my capacity as Head of State and Government.

After the elections, I will join civil society and continue to make my humble contribution to the efforts on the prevailing challenges still facing Mozambique, Africa and the world, particularly in the areas of peace and the promotion of cultural, social and economic development.

I have been attending sessions of the General Assembly since 1975, first in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs and then as President of Mozambique. I cherish every moment I have spent here at the United Nations, as part of the global efforts to collectively find solutions to the problems around the world. It has been, indeed, quite a rewarding experience as, through our common resolve, we have been able to successfully advance the decolonization process in Africa and elsewhere, while engaging in the struggle for peace and stability, poverty eradication and development.

As I depart, allow me to share some reflections on the role played by our universal Organization, the United Nations. Reaffirming the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the principles and objectives set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), Mozambique attained its independence from colonial rule in 1975. Since then, the country has been actively involved in the United Nations, has progressively improved its relations with the Organization and its related bodies and has received strong, multidisciplinary support.

Since then, 60 territories worldwide have become decolonized, and millions of people today are able to exercise their right to self-determination.

It was on 16 September 1975 that, for the first time, I had the privilege of addressing the General Assembly from this rostrum. I was then the Foreign Minister of my country, and I was expressing the gratitude of the people and the Government of Mozambique for our admission as a Member of the United Nations.

When Mozambique was admitted, the United Nations was composed of 144 Member States, compared to 191 in 2004. That shows the extent of the growth of our Organization. In Africa, countries such as Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, South Africa and Western Sahara were not yet independent or were under apartheid domination. On other continents, the situation was very similar.

The cold war was at its peak and the arms race was a dominant feature of international politics. The focus of the Non-Aligned Movement was on advocating the interests of the developing countries, on raising international awareness of the dangers and risks of a nuclear confrontation and on the struggle for the establishment of a new international economic order. In those days of high political tensions, international dialogue was characterized by confrontation and intolerance. Today, international dialogue is more one of consultation and the search for consensus. The constructive dialogue existing among Africa and the Group of Eight, the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the South American Common Market (MERCOSUR) and other regional groupings are good examples of the prevailing new international political mood. Throughout this process, the United Nations has played an important role.

Soon after its independence, my country had to face the economic and social consequences stemming from its decision to close its border with Southern Rhodesia, in compliance with a United Nations resolution that imposed sanctions on that neighbouring Territory. It was a costly measure, but because it achieved its aim of ending the illegal regime in that Territory, we feel proud to have taken that action.

During that period, Mozambique enjoyed important support from the United Nations, particularly in the areas of health, education, rural development, advocacy and emergency assistance for the victims of war and natural disasters.

Following many years of a destabilizing war, the Government and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), the former guerrilla group, signed the General Peace Agreement on 4 October 1992. Soon after the signing of the Agreement, the Security Council approved the establishment of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) to monitor and verify its implementation.

We deeply appreciate the resolute and decisive involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, with the mobilization of human, material and financial resources. That strong support from the international community, combined with our people's will and determination to achieve peace, led to what many regard as the first example of a successful United Nations peacekeeping mission in Africa.

During the last 12 years of peace, our country has benefited from considerable support from the United Nations and its various specialized bodies for reconstruction and development activities. That support has been critical for economic growth and the gradual improvement of the people's living conditions.

In 2000, unprecedented floods devastated Mozambique. Those floods affected the central and southern parts of the country, causing heavy losses of human lives and infrastructure. Again, the response of the United Nations and the international community to the disaster was commendable. We take this opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to both the United Nations and the international community in general for their unconditional support, without which the losses could have been heavier.

As a result of sound economic and social policies and an enabling political environment, we have been able to record encouraging progress. The absolute poverty rate decreased from 69.5 per cent in 1997 to 54.1 per cent in 2003. From 1997 to 2003, real average gross domestic product growth was 8 per cent.

We wish to recognize the critical role played by our development partners in assisting our country as it embarked on its steady progress. Their continued assistance will be critical to ensuring the sustainability and the irreversibility of the political, economic and social gains made so far.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic in Mozambique is a growing threat to sustainable development. Together with malaria, tuberculosis and cholera, it is jeopardizing decades of economic and social development. Without an aggressive response by the year 2020, 20 per cent of the agricultural labour force in Mozambique will be lost to HIV/AIDS, and it is estimated that life expectancy will drop to 36 years by 2010.

Within the framework of the African Union and its programmatic vision, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Africa has been making important strides towards its renaissance and the ownership of its destiny. In that endeavour, we have witnessed a further strengthening of democracy on the continent. Moreover, Africa has been increasingly discharging its responsibility with regard to the maintenance of peace and stability on the continent.

Today we are building self-confidence around Africa and creating the necessary conditions for sustainable development. Through NEPAD we are raising the ownership spirit surrounding African leaders to bring about significant changes in Africa's development. The recognition that success can only be achieved through partnership among all stakeholders is a step forward in the establishment of public-private partnerships, regional integration and cooperation among different regions in Africa.

We would like to commend the decision of the Secretary-General to appoint an advisory panel on international support for NEPAD.

During the last few years, we have witnessed global action towards the materialization of the Millennium Development Goals around the world. In that endeavour, we have registered mixed results with encouraging developments on one side and visible setbacks on the other.

We have seen a strong determination by developing countries to achieve the Goals through relevant domestic actions and policies. However, despite such a clear commitment to improvement of the living conditions of our respective peoples, our goals may not be realized, due mainly to an unfavourable international environment, including insufficient flows of official development assistance and foreign direct investment.

Consequently, we are failing in the creation of the necessary conditions for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We will not be able to achieve the 3 per cent economic growth worldwide that is required for reducing poverty by half by 2015, while sub-Saharan Africa records a disappointing level of economic growth.

The flow of financial resources for the most needed regions is decreasing. Market access remains a challenge for both developing and developed countries. Pandemic diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, are aggressively eroding the productive capacity of developing countries.

We therefore need concerted global action to effectively address those challenges. The meeting of world leaders for action against hunger and poverty held at the United Nations yesterday was an encouraging renewal of the commitment of the international community to make the Millennium Development Goals a reality. The final declaration that was adopted should be the guide to our collective action against hunger and poverty.

The success of the ongoing reforms should be measured against an effective improvement of global governance and the strengthening of multilateralism, with the General Assembly assuming a central role in the conduct of global issues. The United Nations should pursue a multilateral approach that truly reflects the current realities of the world, rather than entrench an anachronism inherited from the end of the Second World War.

I urge you to continue the process of reform of our Organization, in order to have a Security Council that is democratic, representative, equitable and transparent. I urge you to continue with the agenda for economic and social development.

I feel honoured for having shared experiences with Your Excellencies. I will keep and cherish memories of the long and difficult, but gratifying moments that we have spent together, building consensus around vital issues for our Organization and, indeed, for our world. They were precious moments of learning and of individual and collective enrichment.

I express my profound gratitude to the United Nations family for all the support they have given to me and to my country. I plead for the continuation of that solidarity to Mozambique, with the aim of eradicating poverty, hunger and endemic diseases.

I leave you with a sense of having fulfilled my duty and given my humble contribution to the cause of liberation, peace and development of Mozambique, Africa and the world as a whole.

The goal of complete decolonization has not yet been fulfilled, as the fate of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories has yet to be determined. We continue to look for the day when the agenda of the General Assembly will contemplate neither colonies nor Non-Self-Governing Territories.

I look forward to a successful fifty-ninth session, one in which we will focus on the priority actions for the present year and for the years ahead. Whatever we do, we must be able to give real hope to our nations and peoples — hope not just to live, but also to live well and safely; hope not only to continue to be free, but to be free in decency and dignity.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Compaore (*spoke in French*): The current session of the General Assembly is of critical importance to us, not only because of the urgent questions on our agenda, but also because of the distinct honour bestowed upon Africa through your splendid election to the presidency of our venerable Assembly. Burkina Faso congratulates you warmly and, in its capacity as Vice-President of the Assembly, pledges you its full and complete cooperation so that you may successfully fulfil your tasks.

I also wish to pay a tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, who effectively guided the deliberations of the fifty-eighth session.

Our Assembly is meeting at a time when the international community finds itself confronted with growing poverty in the countries of the South, terrorism and fratricidal wars. On the African continent, we can certainly welcome restored peace in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone, but Africa continues to be riven by many conflicts, particularly in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. In Iraq, an uncontrollable situation is gradually plunging that country into chaos, while dialogue still seems to be impossible among the protagonists in the Middle East. In the struggle against terrorism, we must humbly acknowledge that we are far from having developed an appropriate and effective strategy to eradicate that scourge. Killing and the destruction of human life are on the rise in several regions of the world.

And yet, people of good will and international associations and organizations remain mobilized to offer solutions and to restore harmony. That is exemplified by the peace initiatives of the Southern Africa Development Community in the Great Lakes region, of the African Union in Darfur, and of the Accra summit on the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which, under the sponsorship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has revived a spark of hope for national reconciliation in that country. The Government and the people of Burkina Faso reaffirm their support for the Linas-Marcoussis and Accra III Agreements. I wish to reiterate Burkina Faso's commitment to joining any initiative aimed at consolidating peace and stability on the continent.

Peace and security are not the sole safeguards of order and global political stability. In its ability to satisfy the basic needs of mankind, human security is another important aspect thereof. Ever since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the international community has recognized that the greatest challenge confronting humankind is that of poverty. Poverty compromises fundamental human rights, undermines the dignity of individuals and families, and threatens the political, economic and social stability of States.

Of what value is globalization if it ignores such essential concerns of peoples as economic progress, nutrition, health, education and employment? The especially alarming situation in Africa must be recalled in this Assembly: a feeble growth rate, an ongoing decline in per capita production, a slow increase in the literacy and education rates, the ravages of hunger and affliction, endemic underemployment and a disturbing lag in science and technology.

In the face of such a state of affairs, African leaders have undertaken to show more leadership in the formulation of economic and social policies. The convening of an African Union summit in Ouagadougou on 8 and 9 September on employment and poverty alleviation in Africa was an example of that growing awareness and new vision. In the course of that meeting, together with our development partners, we agreed that macroeconomic stability and sustained growth are necessary, but insufficient to reduce poverty. We therefore agreed, inter alia to make employment the centrepiece of our economic and social policies and to strengthen cooperation between the regional economic communities in the areas of employment, training and health care. The Ouagadougou conference also decided to establish a follow-up mechanism for decisions made at the national, regional and continental levels.

Africa needs the effective assistance of the international community to enhance the quality of its economic choices in order to improve the living conditions of its peoples. From this rostrum, I therefore call on our development partners to act along three principal vectors. First, they must respect the commitments undertaken at various forums to increase official development assistance and to provide significant debt relief. Secondly, they must establish rules to organize international trade on a more just and equitable basis. Thirdly, they must implement the recommendations of the report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. Let us see to it that, in September 2005, as we convene the United Nations high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals, relevant consideration and concrete actions will already have been undertaken to that end.

For the francophone community, the themes of solidarity and sustainable development will be considered at the tenth conference of heads of State and Government, to be held in November in Burkina Faso.

We believe that the economic and social well-being to which our peoples aspire can be achieved within the framework of the rule of law. For its part, Burkina Faso has resolutely opted for democracy, and our determination has been fortified through free and open electoral consultations for some 12 years now. We are fully resolved to embed democracy in our institutions and in our society, convinced as we are that it represents one path of hope for our country.

The United Nations must serve as a guide in the management of international affairs. If it is to play that role successfully and accomplish its task, it needs to be deeply democratized. In other words, it must listen to the majority of States and civil society organizations so as better to serve the common interest.

All signs point to the urgent need to reform the United Nations reform and to adapt it better than ever to the legitimate aspirations of nations. Every State, small or large, must assume its responsibility and be accountable for decisions taken for the common good. Today, were the Security Council to grow democratically and equitably in its representation of Africa, Latin America and a large portion of Asia and Europe, it would enjoy greater political and moral resources to meet the challenges of peace and development throughout the world.

Within the new United Nations that we so sincerely desire, the situation of the Republic of China on Taiwan will finally be resolved fairly and acceptably. Reason dictates that that country, which cooperates with a large part of the international community and makes a valuable contribution to universal civilization, should be rapidly integrated into the United Nations.

With the valuable assistance of the Secretary-General, we have laid the foundations of a vast programme to reform our Organization. This construction must produce an edifice sufficiently solid to meet the countless challenges of the twenty-first century.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

> *Mr. Blaise Compaore, President of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.*

Address by Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

> *Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

> *Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.*

President Ravalomanana (*spoke in French*): More than ever, Africa is making headlines in the international community. Unfortunately, it is more about crises, wars and problems of failing States that are attracting the world's attention. Yet, some positive aspects do exist.

African countries are resolutely taking their destiny into their own hands. Good governance is no longer an empty word. Democracies are developing and taking root. The fight against corruption is seriously under way. In many States on the continent, there is a strong willingness for peace, security and stability, as well as better conditions for development.

African countries are deciding to unite in order to strengthen their abilities. The African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Southern African Economic Community, as well as other organizations, are becoming more and more efficient in resolving conflicts on the African continent. They are gradually gaining the respect of their partners from Europe, America and Asia.

For its part, Madagascar has successfully undertaken major reforms in order to ensure stable democracy and good governance, to establish a trustful policy, to protect freedom of the press, to decentralize and evolve the administration's functions and responsibilities and, lastly, to encourage international investment.

Madagascar is seeking to play an active and efficient role in African and international organizations. We strongly support the strengthening of the United Nations. We endorse the enlargement of the membership of the Security Council in order to have a better balance between developed and developing countries. It is high time for Africa to obtain a permanent seat, and this is also the case for Germany, Brazil, India and Japan, which are major contributors to the United Nations.

Madagascar supports any effort to promote peace, democracy and the rule of law in Africa. We are devoted to good governance, respect for human rights and the fight against terrorism in Madagascar and elsewhere in Africa. Recent examples attest to our firm political will, including Madagascar's strong support for the declaration for free elections, signed in Port Louis; its participation in the Moroni Agreement to re-establish peace in the Comoros; and its signing of the agreement on human rights in Geneva.

Madagascar has made great progress, which has been recognized by international institutions and the major Powers. Economic and political development has become a reality in our country. However, we are also threatened by natural disasters, such as cyclones, as well as by the rise in oil prices, by the debt burden and by the lack of access to the markets of industrialized countries. We are concerned by the slow implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action adopted by the international community in 2001. We need more foreign investment on our continent, both in the public and private sector.

I urge the Assembly to assume more responsibility for a just and fair world and urge Members to assume more responsibility for Africa. Africa is ready to take its destiny into its own hands. We are aware of our own responsibilities; however, we must share them. The globalization of the economy must go hand in hand with the globalization of responsibilities.

We know of success stories relating to this kind of responsibility. Nevertheless, we have experienced some cases, mainly in Africa, where the world has failed in its responsibilities with resulting tragic repercussions. Let us look at the African continent. Do not forget the catastrophes of the past nor overlook the catastrophes of the present. But, above all, consider the potential of our future. How will Africa look in 10 or 20 years? Can we imagine this?

Africa can become a flourishing continent; it has enormous potential, which may be the source of prosperity for both Africans and the world. First of all, it has human potential. More than half of the African people are under the age of 25. Today's young Africans are more open and more dynamic. They can narrow the gap between the past and the challenges of today. They deserve a better education and professional training that is suited to the needs of the market. Education-for-all programmes are vital. Investing in education is more profitable than any other investment in poverty reduction. African's destiny will depend on the education of our young people.

Women in Madagascar are sometimes more persistent than men. They deserve more than their traditional role within the family. Let us give them the chance to fulfil themselves, to enjoy the same rights as men. All of us will benefit from their wisdom and dedication.

I would now like to speak about agricultural potential. In Madagascar, more than half of the arable land is still unexploited. We can double or triple the productivity rate. Let us help farmers to organize themselves, to use better seeds and modern irrigation systems and to obtain easier access to fertilizers. Let us set up infrastructures to develop markets. Let us simplify land registration. Let us institute appropriate financial systems to encourage farmers to become entrepreneurs. Let us set up infrastructure and systems for the processing of natural products. Let us build food processing units and undertake related activities. Let us extend the food chain. Let us develop food processing networks in rural areas. The green revolution that the Secretary-General spoke about recently is not a dream.

Next, I wish to speak about economic potential. Development at the base, sustained by international investment, will generate high economic growth. Madagascar experienced economic growth of 9.6 per cent in 2003, and we hope to achieve the same performance in 2004 and 2005. This is also possible for other African countries. With such a high economic growth rate and more than 900 million consumers, the African market will become increasingly worthwhile.

As to energy, we are all aware of the fact that the world energy situation is critical and affects not just our economies but our ecology as well. What potential exists in Africa? Half of the African countries, like Madagascar, could produce an abundant supply of hydraulic energy; only 7 per cent of this potential is exploited; only 1 per cent of the world's solar energy comes from Africa. Let us conclude an agreement on energy development in Africa. The potential lies in reforestation and in the Kyoto process.

Then, there is ecological potential. In addition to the energy and the climate, we can share the values of our nature with the world. Seventy per cent of Madagascar's plants and fauna are endemic. At present, we cannot truly assess the extent to which they will be of benefit for medicine, as well as in other fields.

With all this potential, the development of Africa is in the interest of the great Powers. Their leaders should know what African development can offer to world prosperity, peace and security. Africa is a continent of the future. Africa can become a flourishing continent. Let us seek a common vision and find new approaches to develop Africa.

Africa is ready for a new future. We Africans are ready to resolve armed conflicts. We are ready to win the war against poverty and other diseases. We are ready for enhanced democracy and good governance.

We are ready to work and cooperate closely for peace, stability and security. We are ready for an open market system. We are ready to strengthen our abilities. We are ready for competition. We are ready for new leadership. We are ready for a new Africa.

That is why we ask for international rules that are acceptable to and accepted by all countries, be they large or small. We are asking for mutual respect. We are asking for closer cooperation.

We are asking for a comprehensive plan for the development of Africa. We are asking for a "Marshall Plan" for Africa: a plan that should be based on the NEPAD objectives; a plan that includes the Evian Summit objectives and measures, adopted by the Group of Eight, but that goes even further; a plan that is more than just an emergency measure; an appropriate plan that promotes all the assets — the entire potential — of Africa. Let us act at once and without delay to implement it.

Let us promote the potential of Africa. The impact for African people and for the international community will be enormous.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Georgia.

Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saakashvili (*spoke in English*): It is my pleasure and honour to represent my country today at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation for Mr. Julian Hunte, for the leadership and vision with which he conducted the last session, and by congratulating Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the presidency of this session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my Government's deep gratitude to the Secretary-General for his leadership, for his strong commitment and hard work to make the United Nations a more responsive and efficient body. The Government of Georgia reaffirms its strong support for the important work carried out around the world by this great institution and to all who serve it.

The beginning of the new millennium marks a great opportunity for the global community of nations that make up the United Nations — a community whose collective responsibility is to help strengthen those institutions that promote and protect the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, so that we can more effectively tackle the challenges and the issues facing the world today and so that together we can enhance our shared ability to promote peace, alleviate suffering, expand liberty and advance human development with renewed wisdom and courage.

The belief that we must be able to adapt to great change while remaining faithful to a set of core ideas and values is one that has special resonance in Georgia today, for few countries have witnessed greater transformation in the past year — and fewer still have done so with a clearer sense of purpose. In some respects, Georgia's revolution has made our small nation — willingly or unwillingly — a test case for the modern challenges of democratic transition and perhaps for a revised formula for international relations in our increasingly interconnected and complex world.

Nearly a year has passed since our dramatic Rose Revolution graced the cover of newspapers and television broadcasts around the world. This revolution had at its core one simple demand: the creation of a stable, equitable and functional democracy. It gives me great pride, Mr. President, to inform you that we have accomplished that demand in ways that few abroad or at home ever imagined possible. And I am enormously proud of my people, whose courage, unity and steadfast belief in a better future made our revolution and transformation possible. It is because of the Georgian people that our experiment in democracy is a success, and because of their sacrifice and determination that we have achieved such impressive results today.

In less than a year, we have proven the depth and breadth of our commitment to democracy successfully by holding three sets of elections — presidential, parliamentary and regional — which were recognized by all observers as free and fair expressions of the public will.

We have proven that we can take care of people such as the teachers of my country, who just a few days ago received as much as 12 years in back pay from our Government. I was recently told by a local governor of how one such teacher — who had not been paid since our independence — had just received her payment for all of those years. For all of those years, that brave woman, who sacrificed her health and her livelihood for the education of younger generations while surviving on the meagre income from a small plot of land, watched as our corrupt officials — at her expense and that of her compatriots — were creating their own wealth, constructing huge mansions and filling their Swiss bank accounts. Finally she got her money back. She also watched the corrupt officials chased away from power and held accountable under our legislation.

Never again will loyal public servants have to harvest food from their gardens to make ends meet. Never again will they have to face a Government that disrespects their dignity. Protecting people like that teacher is the reason why we have confronted corruption in Georgia so vigorously, since corruption threatened the very fabric of our society. By first going after government officials who were corrupt and who enjoyed a near-untouchable status, and then seeking to address the institutional aspects — the corruption that basically gave rise to such government officials — we have been able to reinstate the rule of law and create lasting change in the system.

That is why we conducted a radical downsizing of our security services, police and customs by up to 50 per cent. Instead of poorly paid government officials — civil servants who were not given any real salaries and who were compelled to extort money from their fellow citizens — we have now introduced new salaries that are sometimes 8 to 10 times greater than those paid previously, as well as new rules of the game.

We have introduced new salaries that are sometimes eight to 10 times larger than those paid previously, as well as new rules of the game. We have introduced the first-ever civilian leadership in defence, security and law-enforcement bodies. We have made these painful choices because we know that, unless we change the system itself, we cannot change the corrupt behaviour of our State officials. It is those officials who are responsible for the corrupt behaviour of businesses — not the businessmen themselves.

It is we who are responsible for failing to build a better future for our citizens. Winning this battle will mean that all citizens of my country will finally have a chance to live in a normal State — where merit rather than money makes a difference, and where rules and laws firmly and clearly govern people's actions.

As I said earlier, in order to make such changes permanent and sustainable, we have raised salaries six, eight or even tenfold for public servants, so that incentives are aligned, a fair system can flourish and people can serve the State with dignity and honour.

That is why we have created a new tax system that clarifies and simplifies both the payment and the administration of taxes — creating the lowest-tax regime and the least complicated tax code in the region, and eliminating institutional sources of cheating and corruption.

To hesitate or move cautiously at this critical stage would mean reneging on the promises we have made and returning to business as usual in this part of the world. Our people will not forgive any hesitation.

I believe that we cannot refrain from initiating reforms and taking radical steps at this time if we truly want to build a better future and forever change the rules of the game.

But Georgia today is a visibly different State than it was one year ago, with fewer games and new rules. That is why those who fled Georgia throughout the past decade — one of decay and crisis — are now starting to return to their homeland. They are putting their skills, talents, ideas and energy to work for their new country. There is a great deal of new energy and a new optimism, which we are happy to observe.

There is a renewed sense of hope and a renewed sense of purpose that speaks of unity and the unique strength that comes with it. Georgia's experiment in democracy is an ongoing success, not simply because I declare it or wish it, but, rather, because the people of Georgia continue to embrace it. We are a nation that has a strong cultural heritage and identity, but that at the same time celebrates and cherishes religious and ethnic tolerance and religious freedom as part of that identity and that heritage. We are a nation that believes in the sanctity of rule of law and a strong judicial system.

One thing is clear: democracy is thriving in our part of the world although many people thought it would not be possible. That is because the principles of democratic governance are reflected in our national identity and universal desire to be free.

The creation of a successful State depends on the ability of its institutions to act maturely and responsibly in the face of shared challenges. In this new millennium, it is clear to all responsible nations that one issue above all others unites us as we seek to promote lasting peace, security and prosperity: the common war on terrorism.

As a member of the global coalition that seeks to eliminate the threat of terrorism, Georgia has made, and will continue to make, contributions wherever possible and wherever necessary. Our willingness to act responsibly and to contribute is evident today in Kosovo and in Iraq — and soon will be in Afghanistan — all places to which we have sent our forces to serve alongside others in the pursuit of peace and freedom. For terrorism knows no greater enemy and no greater force than the one embodied in a free society.

Today I am proud to announce Georgia's newest contribution to freedom: our offer to send fresh troops to Iraq to serve in the special protection force for the United Nations Mission in Iraq. In offering our services to the United Nations Mission, we are hopeful that our presence will foster lasting stability, prosperity and freedom for the Iraqi people — freedom worthy of all those who live in the region at large.

In the context of our cooperation with international anti-terrorist efforts, we especially value the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council, and we support the idea of strengthening the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the Secretariat.

At this point, however, one could reasonably ask why such a small country — one of fewer than 5 million people — is so out in front in its international commitments to fighting terrorism and in contributing to that global cause. The answer is as painful as it is simple. Simply put, Georgia's commitments to fighting terrorism reflect our deep understanding of the destruction that it can and has wrought in our own country and in our immediate neighbourhood. Georgia understands that we must do all we can to defeat terrorism.

Unfortunately, Georgia today is still dealing with the results of unresolved separatist conflicts in two parts of our country — Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Those conflicts have resulted in loss of life, the destruction of property, and the forced exodus and ethnic cleansing of 300,000 Georgians, thus creating a large population of internally displaced persons. Those conflicts cannot remain unresolved; we as a country will never get used to the loss of control over that part of the territory or to the plight of those who have been deprived of their livelihoods and their basic human rights.

Georgia's new democracy is committed to resolving these conflicts, because no democracy can allow black holes to exist on its territory. Indeed, their existence is fundamentally incompatible with progress, development and lasting stability. No democracy can tolerate them on its territory.

Today, we are living in an era where the civilized nations of the world are united in a global war on terrorism, and, in that world, neither Georgia nor the rest of the international community can afford to look the other way. Uncontrolled zones breed crime, drug trafficking, arms trading and, most notably, terrorism.

The threats posed by violent separatism affect the security not only of Georgia but of the entire Caucasus. In places like Abkhazia, on the shores of the Black Sea, these lawless zones have the potential to affect European security as long as the situation there remains unresolved.

The lawless territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are safe havens for mini-dictatorships, tightly controlled by elite groups that seek to profit from the criminal status quo. It causes me pain to say that, in these extremely closed societies — by and large cut off from the rest of the world — children grow up with guns in their hands instead of books. Their heads are filled with hatred and intolerance, instead of respect for difference and appreciation for cultural diversity.

We must put an end to this cycle of destruction. We must do more to eliminate the threats to peace and security that have for too long retarded our development.

As we seek to find lasting solutions to these "frozen" conflicts, once again Georgia can be considered a test case. Our success in that respect would be your success, too. Here, I want to state in the clearest of terms that Georgia is fully committed to solving these conflicts through solely peaceful means. Georgia will not and cannot use violence to solve these conflicts, because no democracy can go to war against its own people.

What all parts of Georgia need today is development, investment, security and lasting economic growth. We will peacefully reincorporate South Ossetia and Abkhazia, so that all citizens of Georgia can share in the fruits of our success.

I believe that the most effective mechanism for establishing Georgia's unity is the creation of a strong economy, where those who are not yet sure if they want to remain outside Georgia will be given real incentives and chances to benefit from a prosperous, tolerant and successful State — a place where they and their children will be able to find jobs, earn stable incomes, and have access to new opportunities and investments.

In a strengthened economy, all of Georgia's inhabitants will know that they live in a State that is able to care for and look after them — in sickness and in health. These are the qualities that an economically strong and democratically vibrant Georgia will guarantee all its citizens. We must do everything possible to realize that vision if we want to build a united future. As Georgia looks to the future, it does so with a clear and understandable plan. Today, I would like to introduce the idea of a new stage-by-stage settlement plan, designed to speed the resolution of these conflicts.

Step one is to initiate confidence-building measures, so that new forms of trust are established that create lasting human bonds between peoples. Those measures could include exchanges and links between various non-governmental organizations — youth group to youth group, student to student, journalist to journalist, athlete to athlete, health-care worker to health-care worker, mother to mother — so that more citizens and more segments of our society can learn to understand one another and to trust one another.

Building confidence means pursuing joint economic projects that create wealth where today there is want and create profits where today there is poverty. Building confidence means restoring and guaranteeing the right of internally displaced persons to return to their native homes.

We can and must build confidence between peoples, as the first precondition for peace. We can and must do more to protect human rights through international police forces in places like Gali and through the existing Human Rights Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, located in Gali.

Together, we could move on to step two, which would focus on specific measures aimed at achieving demilitarization and a truly international format for a peacekeeping operation in our area, transforming the current peacekeeping operation into a broad international operation, so that the people of those regions can live free from fear of uncontrolled militias, irregulars and violent gangs, which hold us all hostage to the status quo.

Those steps will require monitoring, verification and transparency, so that we can achieve the necessary results.

The third stage, step three, envisions a global solution with global guarantees that would lead to the establishment of the fullest and broadest form of autonomy — one that protects culture and language and guarantees self-governance, fiscal control and meaningful representation and power-sharing at the national government level. Most important, it would lead to an autonomy that empowers average people, so that isolated elites no longer act as the sole decision makers over people's future.

Georgia greatly appreciates the support rendered by the Group of Friends and the Geneva process, as well as the concepts and principles contained within the Boden document, which should be transmitted to the Abkhaz side.

Now is the time to enhance those commitments; now is the time for the international community to do much more. Simply put: the international community can no longer afford to look the other way when gross violations of human rights take place in separatist enclaves, just as they can no longer afford to ignore the security risks that emanate from those black holes and smugglers' safe havens.

The relevance of that point was brought to the attention of the world after terrorists seized a school of innocent children in Beslan, surprising and shocking the world with their brutality. The people of Georgia were deeply shocked, and we of course condemn that brutal act and express deep sympathy to the families of the victims of that terrible tragedy, which sent shockwaves through every Georgian household.

As we know, the terrorists that seized the school are common enemies of Russia and Georgia alike. We had seen such individuals — notorious for their acts of destruction, violence and killing — when they unleashed the same kind of bloodshed in the name of Abkhaz separatism 10 or 11 years ago. Those terrible events prove once again that we cannot afford to ignore the dangerous linkages that exist between the separatism on one side of the Caucasus mountains and the violence on the other side.

All separatists sow the seeds of great instability, and lawless zones can be sanctuaries for criminals who conduct acts of terror. It is our moral obligation to put an end to the unilateral practice of reaching out to separatists without the consent or knowledge of the authorities of the central Government in Tbilisi. In order to defeat that evil, we must not allow double standards to persist. I believe that we can work together with other countries in that respect.

The time has come for Georgia and Russia to enter a new stage of cooperation whose goal is to defeat that common enemy. It is our moral obligation and profound responsibility to join forces more robustly in that cause.

I firmly agree with President Putin that we can never negotiate with terrorists or cut deals with killers. But we may — and we should — work with moderate elements who seek peace without violence.

We must reach out to every segment of society. We must do away forever with the Basayevs of the world, no matter what side of the border they terrorize, and reach out to ordinary, peace-loving people. All forms of violent separatism — whether in Tskhinvali, Grozny or Sukhumi — represent destabilizing factors for Russia and Georgia alike.

I am confident that, by working together more robustly, we can make great progress in reducing that shared risk. I believe that there are a number of concrete initiatives on which we can embark today that will bring immediate results — initiatives that again confirm Georgia's status as a test case for the promotion of a foreign policy that leads us away from the outdated politics of domination, advancing, instead, our shared interest and the great potential for regional cooperation.

That means finally coming to grips with the need to close outdated Russian military bases, left over from the past and from a country that no longer exists.

Let me be clear: while we appreciate any help in strengthening our security structures so as to make us a more responsible contributor to international peace and security, Georgia is firm in its position that we will not have any new foreign military bases on our territory.

Today, Georgia needs bridges, not bases; roads, not rockets. And we need cooperation, not competition, when it comes to eliminating sources of instability and terror.

The mechanics of the new relationship with Russia means pooling our resources and efforts to create a joint anti-terrorism centre to counter common threats. It means expanding joint border patrols to the entire Russian-Georgian border, so that no area is left exposed. Thus the era of zero-sum thinking can be replaced with policies that lead to a win-win situation. That is my fundamental conviction.

Those efforts will require greater sharing of information and intelligence, and a greater degree of trust — all of which Georgia stands ready to provide. Why? Because such actions serve the cause of peace; because they are part of what it means to remain a responsible member of the international community of nations; and, finally, because we have no reasonable alternative: failure is not an option.

In order to replace the mistrust and misperceptions that sometimes derail our progress, Georgia today proposes the establishment of new bilateral bodies to deal with issues between us and Russia, in which bilateral issues and misgivings could be regularly discussed and considered. We should begin considering the establishment of such a body so that our relations never again suffer from misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

We should, together, consider issues such as the protection of the rights of Russian citizens now living in Georgia so that no inhabitant of Georgia ever feels forgotten or unprotected. At the same time, of course, such relations would be based on the principles of international law and mutual respect for each other's independence.

All this and more is necessary because there is nothing more important than serving the cause of peace. And I am confident and optimistic that my colleague, President Putin, desires the very same for his people. I believe that Georgia will remain a test case in our part of the world in the near future as we build democracy and further advance cooperation.

Cooperation among the United States, the European Union, Russia and the countries of the Caucasus must become the litmus test for this new relationship. Whether it is the fight against terrorism or the development of energy or of transit and trade lines, the region must become a model of cooperation and stability that benefits everybody.

We are firmly on the path towards integrating into regional security structures that serve the stability and security of everybody in the region. Georgia is becoming an increasingly functional, performing State, after being a failed State just one year ago. We now have a budget that is three times bigger than it used to be. Our structures are much more efficient than they used to be. Our people are more optimistic than they used to be. We could be a major part of those structures, and we offer ourselves as a responsible member of the local and international communities. I am sure that, by following that path, we can unlock the great potential of this crucial and great region for peace, prosperity and stability — a task I look forward to pursuing with all of Georgia's friends and neighbours.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Georgia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mikhail Saakashvili, President of the Republic of Georgia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gašparovič (*spoke in Slovakian; English text provided by the delegation*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am convinced that your work in that important post will ensure further progress towards the attainment of our common goals. I wish you the greatest of success and pledge the full support of our delegation. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, for his excellent work and, above all, for his personal contribution to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

This is the first time that the Slovak Republic has participated in the general debate of the General Assembly as a member of the European Union (EU). Slovakia fully endorses the position set out earlier by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands on behalf of the EU. I am convinced that the enlarged EU will further strengthen its constructive partnership with the United Nations.

The international community is now facing challenges and threats that were unknown when the Charter of the United Nations was drafted. The multilateral mechanisms set out in the previous century have proved to be less than adequate. Recent global events — accompanied by an increase in new and potentially more dangerous and destructive threats — have clearly demonstrated that no country can cope with security issues single-handedly, let alone tackle them over the long term. There is now a greater need than ever before for international solidarity, together with a sense of responsibility on the part of all United

Nations Member States for consolidating peace and stability.

The Slovak Republic is convinced that a multilateral approach is the best response to emerging threats, and that the role of the United Nations in maintaining global security is irreplaceable. In addition, we agree with the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that the United Nations can maintain such a status only if it is able to carry out its basic functions effectively, embark upon internal reform and adapt to current conditions. To that end, the only way forward involves strengthening the authority of United Nations institutions by making their work and decision-making mechanisms more efficient. That is why we have welcomed the establishment of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Its work will undoubtedly rank among the most important contributions made towards reform in the history of the United Nations. We believe that that team of eminent personalities will provide a realistic definition of how the United Nations can contribute to global security and development. Slovakia will help to turn those objectives into reality.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We perceive the issue of reforming the Security Council in the same light. Reform should involve not only enlarging the Security Council, but also making its working methods and the implementation of its decisions more efficient. The Slovak Republic continues to support the enlargement of the Security Council with both permanent and non-permanent members, with the aim of ensuring a balanced regional distribution of seats, including greater representation for the Eastern European region.

In addition, I am confident that this session of the General Assembly will help to build a global security system by strengthening and consolidating the anti-terrorism coalition under the auspices of the United Nations, along with the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council.

Continuing terrorist attacks are leading to significant changes in the area of global security. Terrorists do not shy away from perpetrating the cruellest and most bestial of acts; nor — as the recent events in Beslan have shown — do they hesitate to take the lives of innocent children. Terrorism poses a threat to everyone; no one can be neutral or indifferent. It is necessary that we be resolute and jointly mobilize our efforts in combating it.

The Governments of Member States must fight more effectively against this inhuman phenomenon through mutual support, the implementation of international law and improved cooperation between international and regional organizations. The 12 United Nations anti-terrorism conventions and protocols are of the utmost importance in the fight against terrorism, and the Organization must continue to play a key role in bolstering legal instruments in that battle. The Slovak Republic supports the prompt approval of a comprehensive convention against terrorism as a whole, along with a convention aimed at averting acts of nuclear terrorism.

Maintaining international peace and security has always been one of the Slovakia's main priorities. We have long contributed military units, observers and equipment to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Since our accession to the United Nations, in January 1993, we have participated in 14 Organization-led missions, ranging from military observer missions to humanitarian and demining operations to peacekeeping duties.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Slovak Republic has dedicated itself both militarily and politically to the peace process in the Balkans. Nonetheless, Slovakia has never abandoned its efforts to help bring reconciliation and humanitarian aid to other parts of the world. We have gained respect for our participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa and the Middle East.

Slovakia also contributes to the training of peacekeeping forces. In line with General Assembly resolutions, the Slovak Government sponsored a United Nations seminar held in the Slovak Republic last May, which was attended by a wide range of delegates from more than 70 Member States. The seminar discussed the conclusions of the Brahimi report (A/55/305), which highlighted the importance of standardized training for United Nations peacekeeping missions.

In recent years, the number of attacks on United Nations personnel has increased alarmingly. Slovakia is a signatory to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and appeals to all those countries that have not yet done so to endorse that important international legal instrument, which guarantees the protection of United Nations staff.

Stabilizing the Western Balkans is a global priority and has a direct effect on the stability of Europe. For that reason, it is also one of Slovakia's foreign policy priorities. We have fully supported the activities of the United Nations to date in using its authority effectively to help resolve the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Serbian-Montenegrin province of Kosovo and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Slovakia's proactive approach in that regard was demonstrated by the political stance it adopted towards the resolution of those conflicts, as well as its participation in peacekeeping missions: the Stabilization Force for Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo Force for the Province of Kosovo.

We believe that resolving the situation in the province of Kosovo is a prerequisite for the stabilization of the Western Balkans as a whole. Kosovo still represents a potential source of regional instability. That is why we attach great importance to next year's evaluation to be carried out as part of the Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan. A favourable result in that evaluation could launch a process under which the future status of the Serbian-Montenegrin province would be defined by the United Nations. We perceive the United Nations activities, including the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, as being of great importance in the search for a solution that is acceptable to all parties concerned, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

The Slovak Republic welcomed the transfer of power to a temporary, sovereign and independent Government in Iraq at the end of June. The Interim Council, which was recently established by the National Conference, represents a significant step forward in preparing for the elections to be held in January 2005.

I call upon the Assembly to join us in our absolute condemnation of all acts of violence committed in Iraq aimed at spreading chaos and instability, whether by means of assassinations, the taking of hostages or the intimidation of civilians and public figures.

We welcome the determination of the Secretary-General to continue providing humanitarian aid and support for the political process in Iraq. We believe that the United Nations must play a leading role in supporting the Iraqi people and the Government in their efforts to rebuild their society.

Improving the security situation in Iraq is an essential condition for building long-term stability, democracy, peace and prosperity in the country. A Slovak unit specialized in locating and destroying landmines, weapons and ammunition is currently engaged in a humanitarian mission there. In addition, Slovakia has stepped up its participation by joining a programme for training Iraqi police officers.

The Slovak Republic supports and appreciates the efforts of the international community to establish security and stability in Afghanistan. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is playing a vital role, demonstrating how essential international cooperation can be. The most pressing issues we currently face with regard to creating stability in Afghanistan are, first, the forthcoming elections and, secondly, laying down the foundations of democracy. In addition to those political processes, establishing favourable conditions for economic development is also essential for Afghanistan's long-term stability. The Slovak Republic is contributing to such efforts through its participation in ISAF and its planned involvement in provincial reconstruction teams.

The Middle East peace process must continue in accordance with the road map set out by the Quartet and endorsed by the Security Council, which envisages the establishment of two separate Israeli and Palestinian States in 2005. Both sides should fulfil their obligations stemming from that plan and previous United Nations resolutions. They should also rely upon the international Quartet for help and good counsel when taking those steps.

As we are convinced that international peace, security and development are closely linked, official development assistance and cooperation with developing and transition countries are becoming an integral part of Slovakia's foreign policy. Slovakia's European Union membership and its growing economic potential provide both an opportunity and the obligation to cooperate in the field of development. This year, the Slovak Government has allocated €25 million for development assistance. In 2005, that figure is set to rise to almost €30 million. As a new donor country, Slovakia must work to further improve and formalize its mechanisms for providing official development assistance. It is doing so with the support of the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme.

Severe humanitarian crises also pose a threat to peace and security in the modern world. Such crises are not necessarily the result of armed conflicts alone, but they sometimes have the potential to cause such conflicts. The international community has the means to intervene in humanitarian crises. With respect to the current humanitarian and security crisis in the Sudanese region of Darfur, I am convinced that the international community, in cooperation with the Sudanese Government, will find a solution to the situation through economic and financial assistance. The Slovak Republic has provided humanitarian aid to that region and supports the continuation of peaceful negotiations towards resolving the humanitarian and security crisis there.

The Slovak Republic is fully aware of the enormity of the tasks facing the United Nations in the field of ensuring global peace and security. In that regard, I would like to highlight that Slovakia is a candidate for a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the term 2006-2007 in the elections to be held at the next session of the General Assembly, in the fall of 2005. I can assure the Assembly that in every respect, the Slovak Republic is ready to take on the responsibilities arising from membership in that key organ of the United Nations. As my country's Head of State, I feel it is important to make this personal pledge before the highly esteemed session of the General Assembly. We want to use our membership of the Security Council to intensify cooperation with Member States in all regions and to be a dependable partner when seeking consensus in the resolution of complicated global policy issues.

In conclusion, allow me to wish this year's session of the General Assembly the greatest of success. May it reach conclusions that promote cooperation among Member States, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations and associations — based, above all, upon the principle of multilateralism.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Mwanawasa: I am deeply honoured to have this opportunity to address the General Assembly on behalf of the people of Zambia.

I would like to begin by congratulating Mr. Ping on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. As one of the 21 Vice-Presidents for the current session, Zambia pledges him its support and cooperation. I would also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte of Saint Lucia, for the efficient manner with which he presided over the proceedings of the fifty-eighth session. I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Annan for his relentless dedication to the cause of international peace, security and economic development.

This session of the General Assembly convenes at a time when vexing problems plague the world community. Zambia believes that the key to addressing a host of such difficult global issues as terrorism, HIV/AIDS and the humanitarian tragedy in Darfur is to find multilateral solutions, often within the context of an effective United Nations. Indeed, that is what I would call a multilateral imperative. With that in mind, Zambia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization.

It is also Zambia's hope that this session will build on past achievements to advance the global agenda. Accordingly, Zambia supports the convening of the high-level plenary meeting next year in New York on the Millennium Development Goals, to which we committed ourselves in 2000. We firmly believe that all Member States have a collective responsibility to implement the commitments set forth in the Declaration.

My delegation supports the ongoing reforms of the United Nations. Zambia shares the concerns of other countries that this important process has not yet been completed. Zambia believes that the reforms should address the concerns of developing countries. In that regard, we look forward to the progress reports on the reforms. Zambia appreciates the recent initiatives of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the revitalization, reform and enhancement of the working methods of the General Assembly. My delegation stands ready to continue actively participating in the reform process during this session. We commend the President and his predecessor for the revitalization of the General Assembly as the highest deliberative and decision-making organ of the United Nations.

Regarding the reform of the Security Council, Zambia remains concerned about the lack of progress. I therefore appeal to this Assembly to support the efforts of the Security Council to enhance its decision-making and liaison methods during this session.

As I stated at the outset, Zambia believes in multilateralism, which continues to be an indispensable instrument for achieving global consensus on important, life-saving issues. As a global community, we face challenges that are transnational and interconnected in nature. It is essential that we take advantage of the immense problem-solving potential of multilateralism. Unilateralism should have no place in this global era. Zambia reaffirms its support for the United Nations initiatives in the fight against global terrorism and the proliferation of small arms and any form of weapon of mass destruction. We call upon the international community to take all necessary steps within the purview of the United Nations to combat the scourge of terrorism in all its manifestations. That scourge needs to be fought relentlessly, with total commitment and vigour. Zambia also pledges to continue supporting the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council.

My delegation would like the United Nations and the world community at large to assist Member States in building their capacity to fight international terrorism. And we want to express our heartfelt sympathy for the innocent victims of terrorism in Russia, here in New York and elsewhere.

Zambia expresses its profound dismay at the continued unrest in the Middle East and the impasse in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. We call on the parties to that longstanding conflict to allow for full implementation of the Quartet's road map. Zambia reiterates that the road map offers a viable solution to the Middle East question. We endorse and support the initiatives for a peaceful settlement of the Middle East crisis. In the same vein, Zambia welcomes the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1546 (2004) on Iraq.

We fully realize that economic, social and political development is the primary responsibility of each individual country. We are pleased that the Group of Eight countries continue to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the primary objective of which is eradicating the increasing poverty on our continent and putting African countries on the path of sustainable economic growth. We recognize that the new initiative is by Africans and for Africans, but we cannot ignore the vital importance of assistance from the international community through increased official development assistance.

External debt has continued to consume a large proportion of the national incomes of developing countries, especially the least developed countries (LDCs). The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative was established to assist highly indebted poor countries to reduce external debt to sustainable levels. Admittedly, the HIPC Initiative does help reduce the effects of indebtedness. However, it has some inherent problems which inhibit the full realization of its benefits. The international community must, therefore, continue exploring innovative approaches toward debt elimination. In that connection, we applaud the efforts of President Lula of Brazil in his search for the appropriate financing paradigm for the eradication of poverty and hunger.

As we endeavour to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we are very concerned with the plight of the LDCs, which constitute 70 per cent of the world's population. These countries are likely to miss the target we set of reducing by half the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

Let me briefly change direction and say a few words about certain positive developments in my country, a place where freedom truly is on the march.

As you know the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 was adopted in Brussels in 2001. Since then, Zambia has committed herself to serious economic reform, including privatization, trade liberalization, the adoption of poverty reduction strategies and the creation of an environment conducive to both local and foreign investment. While we are doing our part, we expect corresponding action from the international community, as agreed upon in the Programme of Action. Without assistance, all of our efforts will be rendered futile. Our aim is to graduate one day soon from an LDC to a developing country.

In addition, I am proud to say that my administration is based on the rule of law. For example, we have embarked on an ambitious review of our constitution in order to provide ourselves with a document that will stand the test of time. We call on our cooperating partners and well-wishers to support us in this important endeavour.

This year and next — 2004 and 2005 — are important years in the lives of our people. I call your attention to four important events that are taking place in our country during this period.

First, on 24 October 2004, we shall celebrate the fortieth anniversary of our national independence. Then, in February 2005, Zambia will be hosting the Third African Conference on Peace Through Tourism, the high point of which will be a ceremony honouring the hundredth anniversary of the birth of former United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who died tragically in a plane crash in Ndola, Zambia.

Also next year, my country will celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the town of Livingstone, the tourist capital of Zambia and home of Victoria Falls, also popularly known as the adventure centre of Africa.

In addition, next year we will commemorate the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Dr. David Livingstone's first glimpse of Victoria Falls, the world's largest curtain of falling water, which we call Mosi-O-Tunya, or the smoke that thunders.

It is my honour to invite your Excellencies, and through you all, all your citizens to come to Zambia and participate in these events.

Zambia also welcomes peace initiatives at regional, continental and global levels aimed at ending conflicts and wars in various parts of the world. It is for this reason that Zambia has continued its active participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

With peace prevailing in Angola, that country is now faced with the challenge of post-conflict reconstruction. Zambia calls on the international community to double its assistance to Angola to help tackle the humanitarian situations such as the removal of landmines and the settlement and reintegration of former combatants and refugees. I am pleased to report that on 15 June 2004, Zambia and Angola witnessed the repatriation of some 363 Angolan refugees in north-western Zambia, under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' voluntary repatriation programme. This was a good start to the programme, but more international support is needed.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the imperative of finding multilateral solutions to the problems that confront us. In our interdependent world, all of the problems and challenges that we face can only be addressed through the concerted multilateral efforts of the international community.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of Morocco.

His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in English*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Mohammed VI (*spoke in* Arabic): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. This election is a tribute to Africa and to the brotherly State of Gabon. I am sure that you will carry on the commendable work initiated by your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, with a view to revitalizing the role played by the United Nations and to enhancing its prestige.

I should also like to pay tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his untiring efforts to achieve the objectives of our Organization. I want to assure him, once again, of our trust in him and of our full support.

The world today is faced with major risks and perils of such magnitude that a renewed multilateral system is required. In that regard, we must ask ourselves if the United Nations system, in its present form, is capable of providing effective solutions to the numerous problems that are disrupting the international order.

The end of the cold war, along with progress in science and technology and the opening of markets, should have led to greater security and prosperity, but, instead, the world is still encountering distressing conflicts, which cause considerable human and material loss, to the detriment of development. Human values and ideals are on the decline, while fanaticism, extremism and terrorism are on the rise. The gap between a rich North and a poor South is widening.

It is Africa that suffers the most from the scourges of poverty, hunger, desertification and deadly epidemics, in addition to the problems of illegal immigration, refugees and forced displacement. The countries of the South cannot effectively cope with these scourges on their own without successful regional and international coordination, as well as effective support for local development efforts.

These problems, and their pernicious impact, which is compounded by ethnic strife as well as by regional tensions and conflicts, not only cause terrible suffering but also hamper progress, development, regional integration and the transition towards democracy. The international community is therefore called upon to pool its efforts so that the logic of dialogue and negotiation may prevail over that of force, destruction and war. It must give fresh impetus to preventive diplomacy, at the regional and international levels, in order to preserve peace and security on our continent.

In that regard, Morocco considers that the artificial dispute over the Sahara is, regrettably, still hindering the establishment of the Arab Maghreb Union. I should like to reiterate my country's readiness to cooperate in a sincere and determined way with the United Nations and all the parties concerned in order to achieve, within the framework of international legality, a final, negotiated political solution that would guarantee the sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Morocco, and enable the inhabitants of its southern provinces to manage their regional affairs by themselves, in a democratic, stable environment conducive to integrated development.

Such a solution would spare the area the risk of becoming a hotbed of tension. It would also foster Maghreb integration and enable the region fully to play its role in the Mediterranean and in its relations with African countries of the Sahel, thereby sparing the whole of north-west Africa the risk of Balkanization and the threats of international terrorism.

As an active member of the African family and of the international community, the Kingdom of Morocco is keen to continue cooperating with the United Nations and the world community to settle disputes through peaceful means, volunteering to participate in United Nations peacekeeping missions, as is currently the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Côte d'Ivoire. Morocco is also eager to help bring about reconciliation and the settlement of disputes through peaceful means, as illustrated by the mediation undertaken by my country to resolve the crisis in the Mano River region.

Morocco takes pride in contributing to African endeavours designed to meet the challenge of achieving peace, development, progress and good governance — the very objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Since the accomplishment of those ambitious goals exceeds the capabilities of African countries and requires considerable resources, I urge the international community to support this initiative and to find generous and effective solutions to the debt problem. Morocco has already taken steps in that direction.

As far as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, my country is as determined as ever to work with the international community to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution within the framework of international legality — a solution that guarantees Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of a viable, independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, living side by side, in peace and concord, with the State of Israel.

I should like to stress that, as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee, I am always ready to undertake whatever initiatives are needed and to support meaningful endeavours to restore peace to this region, warning anew of the negative implications of the violation of religious sanctities.

Morocco hopes that no effort will be spared to help brotherly Iraq out of its current predicament and to support its Interim Government in its efforts to ensure stability and security for Iraqis and to create the right conditions to initiate constructive dialogue and organize elections which will enable all components of the Iraqi population to choose their institutions freely and peacefully.

In order to meet the challenges at this turning point in history, the international community has no alternative but to revitalize the current multilateral system.

After the First and Second World Wars, nations realized that it was necessary to establish a global system to govern international relations, within the framework of law and legality. Setting up an alternative global system would not resolve the problem of the fierce trade wars currently raging worldwide, nor the ethnic conflicts, ideological fanaticism and perils of terrorism, whether latent or apparent. I am convinced that the United Nations, which has helped solve countless crises, is perfectly capable of managing the current international situation in a peaceful and civilized way, by revitalizing the multilateral system.

Such an objective, however, can be achieved only if the United Nations is provided with the kind of resources and means needed to meet the geo-strategic requirements of the twenty-first century, and if its working methods and its organs — including the Security Council — are reformed and invigorated. The United Nations system would then become an ideal forum for negotiation and interaction between cultures and religions. Furthermore, it would be effectively instrumental in upholding human ideals, enhancing security and stability and promoting sustainable development.

Morocco, through its chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China and its participation in various regional and international events, including the Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg conferences, has sought to contribute effectively to building this multilateral system, as a top priority on its diplomatic agenda. My country will continue to work for the implementation of the Millennium Goals, urging countries as well as international financial and trade institutions to honour their obligations. Morocco reaffirms its commitment to support the emergence of a new multilateral system built on international legality, justice and equity and cooperation in social and economic relations, and based on an efficient and dynamic United Nations system.

This is the course of action to be taken to enhance trust in the United Nations as the conscience of humankind and the bedrock of a new world order, where the values of peace, global security, joint development, equality, tolerance, democracy and solidarity prevail.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of Morocco for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar, President of the Republic of Chile

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Lagos Escobar (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to express our satisfaction at seeing Mr. Ping preside over this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly and we wish him a successful presidency.

Ever since the signing of the Charter of San Francisco, and before that during the time of the League of Nations, Chile has been firmly committed to the international community, to multilateral cooperation and to the best values of peace, security, development and human rights which this Organization represents. Chile has been an active participant in the international system because we believe that governance at the global level is the logical extension of the institutional order that each State has achieved and can demonstrate in this global forum.

While in the last century our main task was to establish rules of coexistence and conduct for the international community, today, faced with the challenges of the twenty-first century, that task, in our opinion, has become more urgent and ineluctable. What we have before us is a panorama of positive opportunities, on the one hand, and of complex threats, on the other.

For countries such as ours, integration into the global community creates opportunities which a closed society would preclude. We see integration into the global community as providing possibilities for growth and for creating space for our efforts, and we feel that this is the inescapable destiny of all of us. Countries need freedom, peace, security and respect for international law; based on scrupulous respect for treaties, we need to work towards the building of a shared global order.

Stability can be achieved only through governance under which all interests are represented. Thus, voices are being raised in various countries in order to state the obvious: no one can shape the world that is emerging except through agreements and negotiations. The complexity of the world emerging before our eyes is too great to be handled in a centralized or unipolar manner.

Of course, little will be achieved if, at the same time, each country does not put its own house in order. Without justice, solidarity and respect for human rights, there can be no stable or genuinely beneficial governance in our own societies in the medium term. I therefore believe that it is the responsibility of each of our societies to apply the principles of the United Nations and to make them realities. We have an ethical duty to be efficient and effective in the attainment of those goals and ideals.

It is clear, however, that globalization also includes negative aspects that can affect us all. Today, we are afflicted by such public evils as terrorism and organized crime; illicit trafficking in persons, arms and drugs; and the money-laundering associated with those activities.

Nothing is more counter to our principles than terrorism, a virtual dark force of globalization. Accordingly, here in the United Nations, Chile has contributed through its efforts in chairing both the Al Qaeda/Taliban Security Council sanctions Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee, key instruments of the international community for waging this combat. Globalization also has negative spill-over effects on the environment and exacerbates the marginalization of millions of people in societies or even continents who are unable to achieve integration into the global economy and global society.

Faced with that reality of light and shadow, countries like Chile have a stake in helping to improve the positive aspects of globalization and to eliminate its negative aspects. But how do we turn those aims into reality? In our view, the best way to guide the agenda of globalization is through multilateralism. It is in the strengthening of multilateralism that each country has a stake and a national task to fulfil.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Chile has assumed its responsibility to the global community and has sought to act consistently with our values and convictions. Last year, with regard to Iraq, we said that only the United Nations could give the necessary legitimacy for the use of force and for addressing in an effective and unified manner the threats to peace arising from that country. For that reason, and in order to be consistent with our commitment to multilateralism, we said yes to the United Nations when the Security Council requested the presence of a multinational interim force in Haiti. We reacted in solidarity by dispatching to Haiti, in less than 72 hours, a military force and humanitarian assistance.

We have shown that our region is capable of assuming the responsibilities required to ensure international peace and security. Not since the period of our national independence have forces from different Latin American countries acted collectively and independently of the great Powers in a mission to maintain peace in one of our countries. Today in Haiti, the troops of a number of Latin American countries, supplemented by the joint Spanish/Moroccan force, are under the command of a Brazilian general and the representative of the Secretary-General is a Chilean.

If we wish to strengthen multilateralism, reform of the United Nations is becoming increasingly necessary. Its ideals and founding purposes remain valid, but, as a number of speakers have noted here, the power structure upon which the Organization was built at its inception corresponds to a world that is very different from today's world. Not only do we need to expand the Security Council to make it more democratic; comprehensive reform of the Organization is also needed. In addition, the United Nations needs specialization, not a proliferation of similar institutions. It needs greater accountability and a more transparent system of recruitment. It needs to derive the maximum benefit from every last cent that it spends. Many of our States are making those or similar changes in their own public systems. The United Nations can be better than we can in that area. It is a challenge for the Organization and for each of our States.

I had the opportunity to exchange ideas with some members of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. That is why I am convinced that the Panel will offer to the Secretary-General recommendations aimed at strengthening two key areas: first, generate a political commitment that reaffirms the values of the Charter of the United Nations; and, secondly, strengthen the system so that it can face the challenges and opportunities of a world that is more global than it was 60 years ago.

The world requires a larger and better United Nations. We have unacceptable humanitarian crises, such as that in Darfur, Sudan; a steady deterioration in the outlook for peace in the Middle East; and terrorist attacks, such as those in Beslan, Russia, and in front of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia.

In the Security Council, Chile supported the transfer of national sovereignty to the people of Iraq, and we hope to see the elections scheduled for next January. In the case of Afghanistan, United Nations electoral assistance has been essential in the preparations for the elections scheduled for the beginning of October.

The world to which we aspire will be better and reflect greater solidarity with the effective participation of citizens. In that spirit, we will host in Chile next year the Third Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies.

Likewise, we are convinced that globalization will be better only if civil society is recognized as one of its principal actors. That consideration has been a decisive factor in the Action against Hunger and Poverty, which we — together with the leaders of Brazil, France and Spain and the Secretary-General — have promoted to effectively contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Goals.

Yesterday's meeting presented us with a great challenge: have specific answers within 12 months, before the next General Assembly session. Some of the actions proposed depend on governmental decisions; others are the responsibility of multilateral organizations and civil society — particularly non-governmental organizations, the business community, trade unions and universities. We say clearly: it is time to recognize that, in practical terms, the exclusive monopoly of States or Governments in the international sphere has ended; everyone is called upon to participate.

The question is whether reform is possible. Why would the powerful give up some of their power? Our modest experience has shown us that one can negotiate free trade, for example, with the world's most industrialized countries and reach agreements beneficial to both sides. Today, trade agreements cover two thirds of our exports, more than half of which are already free from tariffs. That has not been a simple matter; it requires time, preparation and patience. And why not say this? It involves a degree of conflict with the more developed countries. Trade agreements, in and of themselves, do not provide solutions for a set of issues that can be resolved only at the multilateral level.

That is why we need to successfully conclude the Doha round, because there, decisive issues are at stake that we have not been able to resolve through bilateral negotiation. There we must resolve the issue of anti-dumping, the situation of subsidized agricultural and textile products, complex issues such as those related to intellectual property, and the question of how to deal with pandemics by using generic or low-cost drugs. Those issues are multilateral in nature. We must therefore deal with them multilaterally, and in doing so we must be strong — we, the countries that understand that we are going to define more just trade rules.

It is in that area that common sense is of much more help than dogmatism. One cannot ask others to give up their fundamental interests, but neither can anyone hope complacently for unfair results. That is why integration into the global society is a stairway with many steps. What is important is not to lose a sense of progress — progress towards trade that is free, but fair; towards capital flows that are free, not predatory; towards cultural expansion, not destruction of what is local: our roots, what we are, our identities; towards an exchange of ideas, not lockstep thinking — in short, towards pluralism, so that we all can be better.

I have tried to share with the Assembly the vision and the responsibilities of a country of the South — an open country that is interdependent with the rest of the world. Our modest experience has shown us that it is imperative to strengthen multilateralism as the only approach with the legitimacy necessary to ensure inclusive globalization that reflects solidarity — as has been said here, globalization with a human face.

In conclusion, today's world requires a larger, not a smaller, United Nations and more, not less, multilateralism. Our experience tells us that we can make a reality of our shared dream — the dream that was dreamt 60 years ago in San Francisco, but that now obliges us to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century that is beginning.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ricardo Lagos Escobar, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Néstor Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Néstor Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Néstor Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to commend the outgoing President, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his work. I should also like to express once again our appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to promote peace and multilateralism.

We have come from the South to renew our resolve to participate actively in United Nations efforts to promote peace, economic development and the eradication of hunger and poverty. My country is grateful for the endorsement of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to occupy a seat on the Security Council for that regional Group as a non-permanent member during the period 2005-2006. There, the Republic of Argentina will reaffirm its willingness to promote consensus aimed at strengthening international law and international peace and security. Those are values that we associate with representative democracy, respect for human rights, a fair global trade system, a better distribution of the benefits of globalization and the democratization of decision-making in international organizations.

The United Nations must strengthen itself and move forward in the establishment of valid rules and procedures to guarantee international peace and security.

The report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change could play a key role in this area. Its proposals should be properly discussed and agreed upon in order to implement concrete decisions that reflect and meet the different perspectives and interests of all Member States.

We are convinced that there is no acceptable alternative to multilateral action. Only through collective debate and consensus could a majority of countries ensure genuine action. The only legitimacy for the use of force must come from the decisions of the Security Council. Because of this, we support efforts to provide the Council with greater transparency, and with the participation of the international community in its decisions, without this meaning increasing the existing privileges or establishing new categories.

The Council's action should be innovative and express the political will of the international community, all the while recognizing the fact that the primary responsibility in avoiding conflicts will always rest with the parties involved.

We firmly condemn the acts of international terrorism and related crimes that have so deeply marked the memory of the people of Argentina and of other nations of the world, making it the maximum priority. In this war against terrorism, we require the active participation and cooperation of the entire international community, based on respect for international law.

There is a necessary link between respect for human rights and the fight against terrorism. And we must preserve the balance between necessary defence and respect for human rights. In order to successfully tackle terrorism, we must ensure legitimacy by having the support of international public opinion. According to this logic, the fight transcends the purely military and predominantly unilateral reaction.

In our view, modern threats to peace come from both the criminal action of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, from massive human rights violations and the absence of democratic political participation. But stability and security are also affected by hunger and extreme poverty, by social exclusion, by ignorance and illiteracy, by the spread of disease and epidemics and by irreversible damage to the environment.

As a result, understanding that peace and development mutually reinforce each other, we must work in a multilateral framework that promotes national and international economic systems based on the principles of justice, equity, democracy, participation, transparency, responsibility and social inclusion. Our commitment to peace and to the strengthening of democracy in the world requires decisive action, which makes it possible to combat hunger, illiteracy and disease. These phenomena weaken people's autonomy and dignity and make it difficult for them to exercise their full rights as citizens.

In June 2005, the Third Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Health and the Environment, which we are preparing, will work on the assessment of our compliance with the Millennium Development Goals in the region and will submit its conclusions to the Summit of Heads of State of the Americas, which will take place in Argentina in November 2005.

We know that the problems that are linked to inequality and poverty cannot be resolved with social policies that are based purely on assistance. Even when plans and programmes providing assistance are a necessary resource, we should avoid the growth of societies that are divided between those who work and those who receive assistance. In this framework, it is important for work to feature prominently on the international agenda, linked to freedom, justice, security and protection, taking into account the fact that it is the principal means of social integration.

Economic growth is a necessary prerequisite, but it alone is not enough to remedy the high rates of unemployment, lack of job security and work in the informal sector besetting our societies. In the recent past, many of our countries we have experienced periods of high growth with low rates of job creation, high concentrations of income and a significant increase in poverty. It is clear evidence of the erroneous nature of the myth that economic growth has trickle-down effects. Accordingly, it is important for us to pursue active policies that stimulate business and productive investment and give priority to the generation of decent jobs, within a new model that endows economic change with a strong ethical component. Decent jobs are a more effective instrument for ensuring material and human progress and should become a goal during the international community during the next decade.

Institutional conditions that would generate jobs are of a varied nature and depend on the specific context of every country. However, in developing countries, the ability of democratic governments to meet the legitimate demands of job creation from their societies are impaired by the protectionist measures that limit trade, especially in the agricultural sector. The developed world spends more than $300 billion a year on production subsidies, a figure six times higher than that of the direct aid given to poor countries. The poorest countries lose almost $40 billion a year through loss of exports due to the agricultural protectionism of industrialized countries.

The world and the attitude of the developed countries must change if we are to turn things around. No political system or economic plan can be sustainable while we have the current critical levels of poverty and inequality. This is not something that will favour a particular group of countries; it will promote peace and security throughout the world.

In addition, there is the problem of excessive external indebtedness, the current design of the international financial machinery and the role played by multilateral funding organizations. The 1990s, with its financial excesses at the global level, saw the expansion of already oversized debts for a large number of countries. For the sake of the development of these countries and the international financial system itself, it is important to emphasize the idea that economic growth is the central and decisive variable when it comes to capacity to pay and debt sustainability.

During the recent international financial crises, multilateral funding agencies made a series of mistakes in trying to resolve these problems. The solutions proposed spread to other countries, and this greatly magnified the problem of hunger and poverty.

Argentina's case is an example. After having applied throughout the 1990s the formulas proposed by the multilateral financial agencies, the country experienced a financial crisis that is still not entirely resolved. In 2002, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made a serious mistake in diagnosing the problem that led to major prognostic errors and poor policy recommendations.

On the basis of our more recent experience, and because of the debt experience, we conclude that we have to provide greater leeway to national authorities. We need a different relationship with the IMF, one favouring a solution consistent with the country's capacity to pay, sustainable over the medium and long term and supportive of the principles of equality, social justice, the fight against poverty, hunger and unemployment.

We must promote the reformulation of fiscal accounting methods in the majority of countries, and in particular in the international financial organizations, with the aim of excluding investment in infrastructure, from current spending in the calculation of surpluses.

We know that fiscal surpluses are necessary in order to stabilize economies and respect obligations to the international financial community, but it must be understood that no surplus is defensible. When surpluses are achieved, thanks to the elimination of investment in physical and social infrastructure, this affects the possibility of political stability and growth, which turns something that was positive for countries into an imbalance and a negative for the overall functioning of the economy.

From the tragedy of excessively indebted countries, we conclude that simple formulas which claim to be universal and applicable under any circumstance, at any time and in any place are only ideological approaches to concrete issues that must be resolved with realism, flexibility and proactive attitudes.

We take responsibility for the adoption of alien policies that led us to the worst of all worlds. But it is not enough for the multilateral lending agencies simply to acknowledge their mistake in recommending, requiring and supporting such policies. What we need is an urgent and drastic structural reform of the IMF that will enable it to prevent crises and help to resolve them. From a lender of development funds it has become a creditor demanding concessions. This trend has to change. Otherwise, we will be confined to structural reforms of a theoretical nature the results of which will guarantee nothing to anyone, and then a series of self-critical reviews.

Meanwhile, in our countries inequality will increase because of the implementation of those reforms. The excluded millions those reforms have created will weep and poverty will spread. Mea culpas will be uttered, and we will see the growth in the number of poor people, if we bother to notice them. That is why we say that what is most in need of structural reform are the international lending agencies.

On another subject, we firmly support United Nations peacekeeping operations set up through the appropriate organs. This year we have doubled our military and police staff in peacekeeping operations; currently Argentina is involved in eight of the present 16 operations.

The recently created United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti is of particular importance. It is the only mission established by the Security Council today that is located on American soil. The region has made a commitment to help the poorest country in the Americas to return to the path of growth and freedom and to guarantee democracy as the best way of ensuring dignity, social and economic development and full respect for human rights.

In that regard, Argentina reaffirms its position of principle based on universal respect for human rights and for international humanitarian law. The history of Argentina explains my Government's firm position on an issue that is now part of its identity as a democratic nation.

International disputes must be settled through peaceful means. The United Nations has established, through different resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, that the question of the Malvinas South Georgia and the South Sandwich islands is a special colonial situation, which must be resolved through bilateral negotiations between my country and the United Kingdom. The decolonization Committee has expressed itself repeatedly on this issue, and we greatly appreciate its work to promote the resolution of this question. We reaffirm once again the constant willingness of my country to reach a just, peaceful and lasting solution to this sovereignty dispute, which is an issue of great importance for the people of Argentina. We urge the United Kingdom to comply promptly with the international community's appeal and to resume negotiations.

In the southern framework, we are committed to protecting the international community's interests in Antarctica by ensuring that all activities there are compatible with the Antarctic Treaty and with its Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection. The establishment of the Antarctic Treaty secretariat in Buenos Aires is already a reality. We are grateful for the assistance of those who always supported Argentina as home of the secretariat, which undoubtedly will contribute to achieving the main objectives of the Antarctic Treaty system.

As a peace-loving State committed to multilateralism, Argentina has always supported the settlement of disputes through negotiation and dialogue, in keeping with equity and justice. In that respect, our country fully supports the achievement of a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to an independent, viable State, while at the same time supporting the right of Israel to live in peace with its neighbours within safe and internationally recognized borders. We hope that the parties will resume negotiations with a view to resolving their differences and will comply with their respective obligations under the road map — a plan which Argentina, along with the rest of the international community, considers the best way to achieve a lasting and just peace in the region.

The Argentine Republic supports the attainment of the objectives of reducing hunger and poverty and the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation, which were the main topics of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg 10 years after the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development.

The protection of the atmosphere is of special concern to us, with respect not only to the ozone layer, but to all the action needed to attenuate climate change and to help adapt to the changes that are already taking place — which are at the root of the severe weather conditions that affect developing countries in particular. In view of our concern, and convinced of the need for the prompt entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, we have invited to Buenos Aires the tenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in order to help to give greater impetus to our joint effort to adapt. I hope to be able to welcome and host Government delegations at the high-level segment that I will have the honour of opening in Buenos Aires.

For that reason, we are calling upon the Assembly to show the necessary strength, courage and resolve to create a world of justice and equity and to put an end to the unfair rules often imposed by multilateral financial institutions, which cause very difficult problems for many countries and which increase poverty.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Néstor Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in Arabic*): I feel especially proud as an African to see that Mr. Jean Ping is presiding over this session of the General Assembly. I believe that his qualities as a human being and his vast experience are a valuable asset to the United Nations at a difficult time in international relations, when the Organization must play an even greater role in accordance with its mission and the expectations of the peoples of the world. In order to discharge fully its responsibilities and the tasks entrusted to it, the United Nations must now adjust and adapt, and must reform the structures and machinery that will enable it to strengthen its capacity for action.

There is still much tension in the international situation; indeed, new sources of instability and uncertainty are appearing. A comprehensive approach is required, given the inextricable interdependence of all those issues on all levels — political, economic, social and cultural. Today more than ever, security is one and indivisible. Security cannot even be conceived of without a determined struggle against terrorism. It cannot shirk the requirement that it step up efforts for conflict settlement and prevention, nor can it disregard the pressing need to encourage worldwide development that is balanced, equitable and sustainable. It must be based on genuine dialogue — a dialogue between religions, cultures and civilizations.

There is no doubt at all that excellent work has been done, since the struggle against terrorism became the absolute priority of the international community. Yet, despite the efforts made and resources put towards that struggle, there remains much to be done. In particular, it is essential that we reach agreement quickly on a common definition of terrorism so that we can be clear about the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples against foreign occupation and can stop accepting distorted, confused, ill-conceived viewpoints that see terrorism as part of just one geographical region, religion, culture or civilization. Drafting a comprehensive convention against terrorism is more urgent and important than ever before. It is something we have been calling for now, for more than ten years.

Very close to Algeria, there is a conflict between the Polisario Front and the Kingdom of Morocco that has been going on for almost 30 years. It is a decolonization issue that has not been resolved. The United Nations has clearly established that Western Sahara remains a non-self-governing territory under Security Council resolution 1541 (2004). As in the case of Brunei, Surinam, Belize and Timor-Leste, the peace plan was unanimously accepted by the Security Council and provides a just and definitive framework for a settlement, through the Saharawi people's free exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination.

In seeking a satisfactory solution, Algeria has always supported the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his personal envoy, Mr. James Baker, who has truly earned the respect of our Organization for his tireless efforts. Algeria will continue to support the United Nations peace plan and remains fully available to contribute towards the implementation of the plan, in order to strengthen stability in our region and solidarity among our peoples.

Here I would reiterate that Algeria cannot decide the future of the Western Sahara for its people and does not want to do so. Any attempt to address the issue of the Western Sahara in a context other than that of completing the decolonization process — part of the responsibility of the United Nations — will result in the failure of that process and will delay a final settlement.

Intensive efforts are underway within the African Union to ensure peace and security in Africa, efforts that are leading to prospects for settlement of regional conflicts. Those efforts reflect Africa's firm resolve to become part of a new era of stability, security and progress.

The conditions for establishing a genuinely balanced and mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and its partners through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), have never been as favourable as they are today. A promising change in that relationship is now emerging and gaining importance. For that reason it is extremely important to continue encouraging Africa as it seeks to succeed in its work towards peace, development and integration, which it has firmly started.

In the occupied Palestinian territories the peace process is deadlocked, more than ever before. It is now more difficult to find a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict because of the brutal repression of Palestinian civilians; endless attacks against the Palestinian Authority, its institutions and its leaders; the continuation of a settlement policy; the building of the separation wall, in violation of international law as affirmed by the International Court of Justice; Israel's rejection of obligations entered into in Oslo and its manoeuvering to take everything of substance away from the road map.

In that same region, the Iraqi people face a tragic situation and many complex challenges that require the support of the international community and the United Nations.

At the dawn of the millennium, we all undertook to take up the challenges that we wanted to face together through a responsible global partnership. In all sincerity, can we be content with the meager results achieved to date? It is our hope that the summit in 2005, incidentally the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, will be an opportunity for us to confirm our commitments and to finally take the bold steps that are needed to translate commitments into action, to eradicate poverty, destitution and deprivation, promote sustainable development and ensure peace and stability for all peoples.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Koizumi (Japan): Today, the international community is striving to meet challenges that the founders of the United Nations could not have envisioned sixty years ago. The fight against terrorism and efforts to ensure non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are just a few examples of those challenges.

Japan has always pursued international cooperation centring on the United Nations. As the international community faces new realities, the United Nations must adapt and address them.

The United Nations was created to bring about a peaceful, prosperous, and just world. To that end, Member States have united their strengths to promote international cooperation. Convinced that it can contribute to creating a better world through its own capabilities, Japan has endeavoured steadfastly to fulfil its role as a responsible United Nations Member. Our activities in Iraq and Afghanistan offer excellent examples.

In Iraq, based on the relevant Security Council resolutions, Japan has joined international efforts to assist in the Iraqi people's own struggle towards a democratic and prosperous nation. Japan has been cooperating with the Iraqi people to help them improve their daily life and rebuild the foundation of their public life.

The humanitarian and reconstruction activities of Japan's Self-Defence Forces and its financial assistance of $5 billion are working in tandem to that end. In order to promote international solidarity, Japan will host the third Meeting of the Donors' Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq next month.

In Afghanistan, Japan has from the very beginning taken the lead in assisting national reconstruction efforts. Japan hosted the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in January 2002. Japan has been actively promoting Afghan efforts for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Afghan people are working hard to prepare for presidential as well as parliamentary elections. Those elections are the most important milestones for a new, democratic Afghanistan.

The international community and the United Nations must stand by the Afghan and Iraqi peoples in their strenuous efforts to rebuild their countries.

Weapons of mass destruction, missiles and terrorism threaten international security in today's world. Japan is the only country ever to have suffered nuclear devastation. As such, Japan has been at the forefront in promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Japan hopes to achieve a peaceful and safe world free of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, Japan has collaborated with other countries to prevent States of concern and non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

We must allow no room for terrorism to prevail. In the fight against terrorism, Japan is doing its utmost to strengthen domestic legislation and related measures, and will continue to cooperate with other countries.

The nuclear and missile issues on the Korean peninsula present a serious challenge to the peace and stability of north-east Asia and to the international community as a whole. Japan is determined to continue to seek a comprehensive resolution of the nuclear and missile issues and the abduction issue in line with the Pyongyang Declaration. The six-party talks must go forward. The benefit that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would receive by resolving those issues would be substantial. There is no benefit for it in continuing to pursue its nuclear programme.

After the Second World War, Japan experienced a dramatic economic recovery, with the help of the international community. On the basis of our own experience, we are keenly aware that, in promoting international cooperation, self-help efforts are essential to overcoming difficulties and achieving a prosperous society. Japan's official development assistance therefore has been based on the principles of ownership and partnership.

Environmental conservation must also proceed hand in hand with economic development. Japan has taken the lead in global efforts in such areas as climate change and environmental protection.

In addressing development challenges, including the Millennium Development Goals, Japan will move forward, making further efforts for the strategic and effective use of official development assistance, bearing those principles in mind.

The protection and empowerment of individuals and communities is the foundation of international peace and security. That is why Japan is advocating the concept of human security. Based upon that idea, Japan is making efforts to realize a seamless transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction support in countries such as Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste.

It is my strong belief that there can be no stability and prosperity in the world unless Africa's issues are resolved. Japan initiated the process of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993. Last year, Japan organized TICAD III, with the participation of 89 countries and 47 international organizations. African countries are now promoting regional collaboration through the African Union and working to implement the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The collaboration between TICAD and NEPAD is significant, because both processes are grounded in the principles of ownership and partnership. A stable and prosperous Africa depends upon the promotion of trade and investment, together with official development assistance. This autumn, Japan will host the TICAD Asia-Africa Trade and Investment Conference.

Today, in Africa, we are witnessing the unfolding of another humanitarian crisis. We share the international community's grave concern over Darfur. Japan has decided to provide humanitarian assistance of $21 million. In addition, Japan intends to provide in-kind assistance to the Sudanese refugees in Chad.

In East Asia, there has been remarkable economic development. Japan has been working with the countries in the region to build solid foundations for their own efforts towards economic development. In that region, active efforts are also under way to foster community-building. Building upon the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Plus Three, I have advocated the idea of an East Asia community.

This year, Japan is a candidate for non-permanent membership on the Security Council. Japan, if elected, will redouble its efforts to play a constructive and innovative role in the Council, based on its global contributions.

As the international community rises to meet the challenges we face in today's world, the United Nations must not be left on the sidelines. We need a strong and effective United Nations. Indeed, we must create a new United Nations for the new era. I applaud the timely initiative by the Secretary-General of establishing the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. I trust that the Panel will present the Secretary-General with a bold and ambitious plan for reforming the United Nations.

Peace and security, and economic and social issues are increasingly intertwined. The response of the United Nations must be coordinated and comprehensive. United Nations agencies and organs must be effective and efficient. Changes are needed throughout the United Nations system.

The reform of the Security Council must be at the core of those changes. In recent years, the role of the Security Council has expanded dramatically in scope and nature. The Security Council must fulfil its expanded role, with the maximum cooperation and participation of the international community.

To that end, the Security Council must improve its representation to better reflect today's world. In addition, the Council must be provided with adequate resources to address challenges effectively. Countries with the will and the resources to play a major role in international peace and security must always take part in the Council's decision-making process. The Security Council therefore needs to be expanded, both in its permanent and non-permanent categories, adding new members from both developing and developed countries.

The universal purpose of the United Nations — our common goal — is to maintain international peace and security. In striving towards that goal, each Member State must fulfil its role, commensurate with its own capabilities.

It is our conviction that peace cannot be achieved through force alone. On the basis of that conviction, Japan has played an active and distinctive role. Japan has made considerable resources available for United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as for reconstruction efforts to assist in the consolidation of peace. Japan's Self-Defense Forces have conducted humanitarian and reconstruction activities in such areas as Timor-Leste and Iraq.

Such global contributions to peace are rooted in the fundamental, cherished beliefs of the Japanese people, who have been seeking an honoured place in an international community that strives for peace and prosperity. Those contributions are, I believe, greatly appreciated by the international community.

Recent United Nations peace operations show that there are many dimensions to the achievement and consolidation of peace. Making peace a reality requires comprehensive efforts, ranging from peace-building to nation-building. Japan's role has thus become increasingly vital to the maintenance of international peace and security, which is precisely the mandate of the Security Council. We believe that the role that Japan has played provides a solid basis for its assumption of permanent membership of the Security Council.

In order to better reflect today's world, it is also necessary to remove the "enemy State" clauses from the Charter, as the General Assembly has already recognized those provisions to be obsolete.

The scale of assessments for Member States needs to be more balanced.

Next year, the United Nations will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary. We will hold a high-level plenary meeting to review progress on all of the commitments in the Millennium Declaration. Development, global security and United Nations reform are all high on the agenda. Changes are needed on all fronts. The time has come to make a historic decision to reform the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular.

Time is limited. Our future — the future of the United Nations — is at stake. I would like to call upon the members of this body to work together and take a bold step towards the creation of a new United Nations for the new era.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain.

Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Zapatero (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is the first occasion on which I have addressed the General Assembly on behalf of my country; I am very pleased to do so. My country is an old country — a diverse country, with several languages and various traditions and cultures. Our country is European, Mediterranean and Ibero-American in character.

I am speaking on behalf of a country that has had its share of difficult experiences throughout history. It is a country in which some people who are alive today have known a civil war, a dictatorship that lasted for almost four decades and a democracy that is now 25 years old and that has brought great progress. We have also known the scourge of terrorism for more than 30 years — terrorism that has taken so many lives.

Over the past 30 years, Spanish men and women have learned a great deal about terrorism. We learned early on how evil it is. We became familiar with it. We learned how to defy it and how to withstand its blows with courage and dignity. We have learned how to fight it. Precisely because they have experienced it for 30 years that the citizens of my country felt deeply the pain of the American people on 11 September 2001. We knew how they felt; we know how they feel. Here in New York, I would like to convey the heartfelt solidarity of the people of Spain with the great nation of the United States.

We fully understand the terrible pain that in recent years has been inflicted upon Jakarta, Bali, Casablanca, Riyadh and Beslanq. We know all about kidnappings, bombings and cold-blooded killings. We know what compassion means.

On 11 March this year, a terrorist attack in Madrid took the lives of 192 people. We had never experienced that kind of terrorism before, but we were familiar with the bloodshed and the pain that it caused. I would like, from this rostrum, to express my deep appreciation to all nations for their solidarity with our country when we were suffering so deeply after the brutal attack in Madrid.

Spanish men and women were not afraid. On the day after the bombings, millions of people left their homes and took to the streets and squares of our cities and towns. Once again, we expressed our condemnation, disgust and total contempt for terrorist brutality.

Thirty years of resisting terrorism has taught us that the risk of a terrorist victory rises sharply when, in order to fight terror, democracy betrays its fundamental nature, when Governments curtail civil liberties, put judicial guaranties at risk or carry out pre-emptive military operations. This is what my people have learned: it is the rule of law, democracy and political methods that make us stronger and make them weaker.

We will resist terrorism. Our history endorses our resolve. We will pursue our fight against terrorism, but we will do so respecting domestic and international law; we will do so with respect for human rights and for the United Nations — and in no other way. It is not only the ethics of our beliefs that move us. It is above all our belief in ethics. Our conviction is that legality — only legality — will enable us to prevail in the fight against terrorism.

Nothing justifies terrorism. Like the plague, it has no justification. But like the plague, it has roots that can and must be uncovered. We can and must rationally analyse how it emerges and how it grows, so that we can fight it rationally.

Terrorism is insanity and death, and regrettably there will always be fanatics who are ready to kill to impose their insanity through force, ready to scatter the seed of evil. The seed of evil cannot take root when it falls on the rock of justice, well-being, freedom and hope, but it can take root if it lands on the soil of injustice, poverty, humiliation and despair.

Redressing the major political and economic injustices that devastate our world would therefore deprive terrorists of their popular support. The more people there are who have decent living conditions around the world, the safer we will all be.

In this context, I would like to speak about Iraq. But first of all I would like to speak about the thousands of victims of this conflict: the Iraqis, the soldiers, the civilians who have lost their lives. We extend to them and to their countries our steady solidarity.

The overwhelming majority of people in Spain spoke out against the war. We were not persuaded by the arguments offered by those who promoted the war. We expressed our views in the Spanish Parliament and in the streets. We spoke out loudly, we shouted. We also said that winning the war would be much easier than winning the peace. Peace must be our task — a task that requires more courage, more determination and more heroism than the war. That is why the Spanish troops returned from Iraq.

In any event, what really matters now is to help fully restore the sovereignty and independence of Iraq — a democratic Iraq at peace with its neighbours. We will spare no effort in that task. And so Spain actively participated in the drafting of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) and will continue to offer political and financial support for the process of political normalization and strengthening Iraqi democratic institutions.

There will be neither security nor stability in the world as long as the Middle East conflict continues to bleed. That conflict is the primary tumour for many sources of instability.

Spain firmly supports resolutions adopted by the United Nations, and other instruments such as the Quartet's road map, which is yet to be implemented. The time we are wasting is to be measured in terms of human lives.

Spain stands by Israel against the terrible scourge of terrorism, against which it is entitled to defend itself by legitimate means. Spain firmly defends the establishment of a viable, democratic Palestinian State that can live in peace and security with the State of Israel. Israel will be able to count on the international community to the extent that it respects international law, but the placement of the dividing wall fails to do that.

Spain will spare no political, diplomatic or cooperation effort to try and bring about the peace that is so needed in the Middle East. But from this rostrum, we would also like to extend an urgent appeal to the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations to implement the road map. Those are four powerful players indeed, and we want to see them exerting decisive diplomatic pressure.

In the humanitarian field, Spain has contributed several million euros to help alleviate the terrible crisis in Darfur. However, the Sudanese authorities must, without delay, take all measures necessary to end the atrocities, bring the perpetrators to justice and normalize the situation in the region. It is also necessary for the rebel groups and militias to respect the ceasefire and show a constructive attitude at the negotiating table. In this context, we must support the initiatives of the African Union.

Spain believes we can no longer passively accept the continuation of Africa's forgotten conflicts, and that is why, with partners in the European Union, we supported the establishment of the African Peace Facility, an instrument designed to promote regional solutions to crises in Africa.

In the Maghreb, Spain is pursuing an active and comprehensive policy to enhance political stability and economic and social development in the region. Regional integration and interdependence with Spain and Europe is, we believe, the way to reach those goals.

With regard to Western Sahara, Spain strongly supports the search for a just and definitive political solution that is accepted by all parties and respects the principles set forth in the resolutions of the United Nations. From this rostrum I appeal to all the parties involved to redouble their efforts, within the framework of dialogue and negotiations established by the United Nations, to resolve a conflict that has dragged on for far too long.

May I confirm Spain's commitment to peacekeeping operations — a fundamental part of effective multilateralism that we are seeking to encourage. Our political commitment is reflected in specific contributions in the form of military contingents for Afghanistan and Haiti, in accordance with explicit Security Council mandates.

Peace and security will spread through the world only with the strength of the United Nations, the strength of international legality, the strength of human rights, of democracy, of men abiding by the law, with equality of men and women, with equality of opportunities, no matter where people are born. We reject those who would manipulate us or wish to impose any kind of religion or belief. The strength of education and culture is essential, for culture is always peace. Let us ensure that our perception of others is coloured by respect. There must be dialogue among peoples.

Thus, as a representative of a country created and enriched by divers cultures, in this Assembly I want to propose an alliance of civilizations between the Western and the Arab and Muslim worlds. Some years ago a wall fell. We must now prevent hatred and a lack of understanding from building another wall. Spain proposes to the Secretary-General — whose work at the head of this organization we firmly support — the possibility of establishing a high-level group to move ahead with this initiative.

This is the house of nations, but I see only women and men. I hear only the voices of women and men who represent billions of other women and men. Many of these voices — many feeble and barely audible, the voices of children, the weak, the hopeless — come from lands devastated by poverty and inequality.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is they whom I now want to address to declare that Spain strongly supports the Millennium Declaration Goals with respect to development, poverty eradication and the preservation of the environment. Poverty is the main cause of uncontrolled migration flows. But no wall, no matter how tall, can prevent those who suffer from trying to escape poverty in order to recover their dignity as human beings.

For those reasons, we are firmly committed to the political declaration we adopted yesterday within the framework of the International Alliance Against Hunger — promoted by President Lula da Silva — which establishes new ways to fund development. The Government of Spain will substantially increase its official development assistance in order to reach the threshold of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product.

In order for there to be peace, security and hope all over the world, international instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights need to be strengthened and effectively implemented. That is one of the basic pillars of our foreign policy. Our objectives are the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, the universal abolition of the death penalty, the effort to end discrimination against women, gender-based violence and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, the protection of children and the combating of child abuse and exploitation, and the strict observance of human rights in the fight against terrorism and crime.

World peace and security require respect for legality. Therefore, Spain wishes to promote the effective functioning of the International Criminal Court. To that end, I call upon all States that have yet done so to ratify the Statute of the Court fully, unconditionally and without delay and thus help us in our common endeavour to build a world that is more just.

My Government wholeheartedly supports the United Nations reform process set out in the Millennium Declaration and endorses the Secretary-General's initiatives for the reform and institutional strengthening of the Organization. Spain believes that it is essential for the future of the international order that the reform be aimed at ensuring effective compliance with United Nations resolutions, in particular those of the Security Council.

The Security Council must be made more representative, democratic, effective and transparent. To that end, Spain is willing to consider new proposals for achieving consensus on increasing the number of non-permanent members and on the use of the veto power.

I want to reaffirm Spain's commitment to the just causes of the Latin American peoples and to consolidating democratic systems and political stability in the region. I reaffirm our support for economic progress aimed at reducing inequality and strengthening social cohesion. Within the European Union, we will continue to promote a closer relationship with that region through the development of a strategic partnership between both sides of the Atlantic.

I would not wish to conclude my statement without referring to the question of Gibraltar. Every year, the General Assembly reiterates its calls to Spain and the United Kingdom to pursue bilateral negotiations in order to reach a definitive solution to the dispute. I affirm that my country will continue its willingness to negotiate a solution that benefits the region as a whole and heeds the wishes of that non-autonomous territory.

The United Nations was born of necessity and ideals. It was built by women and men who affirmed their faith in understanding among peoples and cultures. They left us a legacy of utopia. They thought that everything was within their reach: the settlement of old conflicts, the eradication of poverty, rights for all human beings. Today we could ask ourselves, what is within our reach?

Almost everything is. It is true that the history of humankind does not give us many reasons to be optimistic. Nor does the world today offer us many reasons to feel superior to the men that preceded us. One out of three countries in the world does not have a free system. Torture continues to exist. There are more than 30 armed conflicts around the world today. Half of the war victims are children. Millions of people are suffering from AIDS. One billion human beings subsist on a dollar a day. More than 800 million adults are illiterate. More than 150 million children are without access to any kind of education. More than 1 billion people lack safe drinking water. No, we human beings cannot feel very proud of ourselves.

We must fight to overcome this situation. We, the Spanish women and men of today, are resolved to make it possible for the women and men who come after us to be able to say: yes, they did do it.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Nanos (Albania): It is my special pleasure to address the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. This universal forum has enabled the peoples of the world to coordinate and harmonize their efforts in preserving peace and security, in achieving prosperity and upholding the values of human civilization.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on being elected to preside over this august body and to express my confidence in your successful leadership.

I would also like, on behalf of Albania, to convey to the Secretary-General our highest appreciation for his leading contribution to the fulfilment of the historical mission of the United Nations and to the aspirations of our peoples for a better world in which only peace, democracy and economic prosperity reign.

This session of the General Assembly takes place in a milestone year for Europe. Only a few months ago, a historic event vitalized the dream of a more united and stronger Europe. Ten European countries, sharing a common aspiration for integration, were admitted into the European Union.

The Albanian Government and society are engaged in an all-round European integration process, and they are carrying out necessary reforms with the necessary political will and drive.

Albania is working to strengthen the democratic institutions and capacities of its central and local government with a view to bringing its legislation and conditions into line with European Union standards, progressively achieving concrete and measurable results, as previously defined.

Determined to make our contribution to regional and global security, the Albanian Government considers the country's integration into NATO to be one of its major objectives. The NATO Istanbul Summit last June commended the progress made by my country in this regard and encouraged the deepening of reforms. It welcomed Albania's contribution to regional stability and cooperation and committed to assess our further progress at the next NATO summit, which would hopefully mark the start of negotiations for our full membership in the alliance. We believe that the commitments set up in the framework of the Adriatic Charter are also contributing to meet NATO standards, to the benefit of regional stability and security.

We remain truly convinced that the respect and protection of human rights and freedoms are the main pillars of a pluralist democratic society. The Government of the Republic of Albania will continue to constantly demonstrate its commitment to a full implementation of the standards enshrined in the United Nations and Council of Europe conventions, as well as the relevant documents of regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in which we are playing a very active role. We will continue to do so in the future as well. By adopting contemporary legislation and by becoming a party to other recently adopted international instruments on human rights, Albania has associated itself with countries that are enforcing a number of national strategies and programmes focusing on specific population groups, especially women, children, persons in need and minorities, among others.

In recent years, the Albanian Government has started to periodically submit reports to the committees of the six main United Nations human rights treaties and is taking their recommendations into serious consideration. It is our belief that these international mechanisms play a significant and important role as guardians of the common human values we have together adopted.

Albania, as one of the 191 signatory countries of the Millennium Declaration, remains fully committed to implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, which have been properly reflected in a national strategy for social and economic development. The pattern of our sustained economic growth, which is at 6 to 7 per cent for the seventh consecutive year, is a good support base for the whole society to maintain higher standards of respect for human rights and to fight poverty and crime. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations specialized agencies for their valuable assistance in support of the implementation of these objectives nationwide and on a central and local level.

The Albanian Government is pleased to note that an ever-healthier climate of confidence and relations of bilateral and multilateral cooperation are prevailing in the South-Eastern European region. The countries of the region are fully engaged in a process that will lead us clearly toward Euro-Atlantic integration and at the same time continually remove us from the extremist tendencies that caused a number of conflicts in the last decade. The regional policy of my Government is guided by the motto: "the more integrated in the region, the more integrated in Europe." In implementing this policy, Albania is cooperating as never before with all the countries of the region by making borders less relevant, opening up to one regional market the implementation of free trade agreements and free movement corridors, and stimulating foreign direct investment. We are especially cooperating with the common fight against organized crime and all kinds of illegal trafficking. In the meantime, Albania is reinforcing its border management and control, guided by the European Union and NATO standards.

My country will hold general parliamentary elections by the middle of next year. We are committed to doing all that is required to ensure that the election process is fully compatible with international standards for free and fair elections. To that end, we are committed to continuing to work with relevant specialized institutions on elections by fully implementing especially OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) recommendations. For us, the process and standards are more important than the results of the elections.

In the context of strengthening regional cooperation, my country is committed to a more enhanced partnership with all regional organizations and initiatives that serve the promotion of good neighbourly relations; the strengthening of regional peace, security and stability; ensuring political support for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, and attracting financing for national and regional projects in priority fields such as energy, transportation and telecommunications.

On its path towards European integration, the South-East European region is still facing pending challenges, such as the future of Kosovo. Albania greatly appreciates the recent democratic and integration developments in Kosovo, thanks to the efforts of the respective peoples and the partnership of its self-governing institutions with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Allow me at this point to congratulate Mr. Soren Jessen-Petersen, Special Representative for Kosovo of the United Nations Secretary-General, in assuming this very important duty.

The Albanian Government shares the view that the time has come for a rapid and coherent implementation of the policy of standards of a multiethnic democracy and European status for Kosovo. This would be the key to the solution of a number of other issues. We truly hope that the question of the final status of Kosovo will reach a final solution soon, for the sake of the people of Kosovo and for the enhancement of the Europeanization process of the whole region.

In the meantime, we support all efforts to build a democratic and multicultural society in Kosovo that is governed by the rule of law, ethnic and religious tolerance and cohabitation. Particularly helpful in this regard would be the further energizing of UNMIK's transfer of authority to the legitimate institutions of Kosovo that are already being anchored to European integration agendas.

We believe that in the upcoming October parliamentary elections, the Albanian and other ethnic communities of Kosovo will demonstrate their best values, taking a major step toward the consolidation of multiethnic democracy in the region. We also hope that the Serbian minority in Kosovo will assume its responsibilities and, through a free vote, make their contribution to the European future of Kosovo. Their participation in all levels of the democratic institutions of Kosovo would further contribute to the consolidation of peace, stability and the European perspective in the whole region.

My Government supports a stimulation of direct dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, both on political and technical issues. This is fundamental in resolving the pending problems and is in accordance with the spirit of regional and European integration.

The tragic terrorist attack one year ago in Baghdad, which took the lives of 22 people, including United Nations Under-Secretary-General Sergio Vieira de Mello, is still fresh in our memories. Such hideous and punishable acts, which continued in the following days and months there and in other countries of the world, such as Turkey, Spain, Russia, Indonesia and others, show that terrorism is today the biggest threat to international peace and security, to stability and to the values of world democracy and civilization.

In the global effort to combat terrorism, our countries have already understood that, first of all, it cannot be identified with one people, one religion, one race or only certain groups of society. We believe that the fight against terrorism will only be successful if we join efforts. In that context, we support the strengthening of international cooperation among States and international organizations, in which the United Nations has an irreplaceable role.

The Albanian Government has been consistently committed to making its contribution as an active member of the international coalition against terrorism. We have peacekeeping troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. We have signed, ratified and now are implementing 12 United Nations conventions and protocols against terrorism. We are doing the same with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, cooperating with and presenting regular reports to the Council. The Albanian Government salutes the decision of the Security Council to play a more active role in the fight against threats stemming from the possession and trafficking of weapons of mass destruction. We support Security Council resolution 1540 (2004).

Albania has, on the other hand, taken all measures for the implementation of the Code of Conduct on the Safety and Security of Radioactive Sources of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), convinced that this international instrument is extremely important to preventing threats stemming from the misuse of radioactive materials. Albania has already taken the decision and will soon sign the Protocol Additional to the Safeguards Agreement of the IAEA. This year, Albania also joined the Proliferation Security Initiative, with its respective commitments that will create benefits for all.

Peace and stability have not been fully established in certain regions of the world. The United Nations and the Security Council are the authorities mandated by the Charter to preserve peace and security globally. It is only natural that crisis-solving solutions and initiatives in such hot spots around the globe as Iraq, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Sudan and so on remain high on their agenda. We believe that a more active engagement of the international community is required in finding the most suitable and lasting solutions for those crisis situations, as is the further enhancement of the role and effectiveness of the United Nations structures.

In that regard, the Albanian Government welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) of 8 June on Iraq, approving the provisional Government of Iraq and transferring to it authority and sovereignty, the independence and territorial integrity of Iraq, Iraqi Government control of the armed forces and, in particular, the holding of democratic elections in early 2005. The progress made in Iraq is due to the cooperation between the Iraqi Government forces and those of the Coalition. We would wish, however, to see a further lowering of tensions and a full stop to violence. We would wish for increased security, more stability and the establishment of a democratic society.

That is why we strongly condemn the strategy of violence and hostage-taking to achieve political goals, sometimes cloaked under a religious veil, and we join our voice to those of all the international actors that have called for an immediate stop to those acts. The Albanian Government supports the efforts of the United Nations to provide the assistance necessary to build national democratic institutions in Iraq and to the holding of free and democratic elections early next year.

My Government also follows with great concern the developments in the Middle East. Like the whole international community, we hope to see an end put to the deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where violence towards the civilian population is increasingly claiming innocent lives, especially those of women and children. On the other hand, we condemn any terrorist act against the civilian population, irrespective of whose name it is committed in.

The Albanian Government strongly believes that peace can and should be achieved only through dialogue and negotiation. We are convinced that the Security Council, the Quartet and the international community have the authority and the capacity to establish a stable peace in Palestine and throughout the Middle East based on the Security Council's resolutions and the road map. The international community should continue to monitor closely the implementation of the road map in order to avoid any deviation from or change, misinterpretation or blocking of it by the parties to the conflict.

Current developments and realities in the international arena, and the acute problems and challenges we are all facing — such as preserving peace and security, facing the threats and dangers of terrorism, the fight against poverty and fatal diseases, the effects of globalization and environmental degradation — have increasingly sharpened the need to revitalize our Organization. The Albanian Government is fully supportive of the efforts of the Secretary-General to reform the Organization, in particular the initiatives taken regarding the reform of the Security Council. We join with the voices that call for a stronger United Nations and for more efficient organs and mechanisms engaged in monitoring the implementation of obligations by United Nations Member States, in particular those concerning global security.

We therefore think that the time has come to have a more representative, more transparent and more flexible Security Council that could better reflect current realities. Its enlargement with permanent and non-permanent members would increase the possibilities for all States Members of the United Nations to contribute to the preservation of international peace and stability. It would be a significant step towards the completion of United Nations reform.

My country is willing to contribute further to the activities of the United Nations, especially in the global and regional agendas related to sustainable economic and social development and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights universally. To that end, Albania has modestly presented for the first time its candidacy to become a member of the Economic and Social Council for the period 2005-2007. We hope we shall succeed.

A few weeks ago, the whole world witnessed the successful conclusion of the Olympic Games in Athens. Gathered around the Olympic torch, sportsmen and women demonstrated how closely nations can stand with one another and how we can get rid of hatred and conflict from our midst. Let the symbol of Olympic peace and fraternity help us to build a better, more secure world for us and for generations to come.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fatos Nano, Prime Minister of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden.

Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Persson (Sweden): A few weeks ago, 200 innocent children were killed by terrorists in Beslan. Today alone, 1,700 children will be born marked by death from HIV/AIDS from their first breath. Also today, hundreds of children will die from starvation, bullets or mines in numerous parts of the world.

Has this world become a better place than it was a generation ago? Yes, I still believe it has. Democracy is more widespread than ever before. The cold war has come to an end. Fewer people are suffering from famine.

Better — but still, this world is not a good place. As long as children die of famine, as long as war and violence end lives that have barely started, the world is not good. As long as children die from curable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, we — the political leaders of our countries — have not done enough.

We need a stronger commitment, a stronger link between words and deeds. We must pull together, more determined than ever. Each individual carries a responsibility to take action for the sake of the collective. We need a stronger United Nations.

I want to see progress. Sweden is a staunch supporter of United Nations reform efforts. While advocating reforms, we believe that the core principles of the United Nations Charter remain as valid as ever. Threats to international peace and security must be met collectively. The use of force is permitted only as a last resort and when authorized by the Security Council, unless it is an act of self-defence.

We need to make the United Nations more relevant. We need a United Nations that can act early and quickly, in an integrated, sustainable and legitimate manner. Last year, the Secretary-General called upon us all to take decisive action in order to safeguard multilateralism. He will need our strong support to follow up on the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change.

For the Security Council to remain legitimate, representative and relevant, its composition must better reflect the world of today. Since the adoption of the United Nations Charter, a small number of countries have emerged as key political and economic Powers. Those countries should be given a role which is commensurate with their importance. We also need a Security Council that ensures the legitimate interests of small and medium-sized countries. An expansion of the Security Council should not undermine its efficiency. A way to safeguard this would be to limit the use of the veto power. I hope that the High-Level Panel will present a bold proposal that will end the present stalemate. A joint seat for the European Union should not be ruled out as an option for the future.

Managing transition from conflict to peace has become a primary responsibility of the United Nations. A standing committee of the Security Council to advise it on post-conflict transition issues would facilitate that task. The Economic and Social Council must be more effective in bridging the gap between peacekeeping, peace-building and development.

Still, weapons of mass destruction constitute one of the main threats to international peace and security. The threat of terrorism in connection with the proliferation of such weapons is real.

The need for strong policies in disarmament and non-proliferation is acute. The nuclear-weapon States must show real progress towards disarmament. Efforts to combat proliferation must be strengthened. Compliance with existing treaties leaves much to be desired, and must improve.

A wave of terrorist acts has shaken the world in the past few years. The months when we have not had to mourn victims of terrorism are easily counted. We are all repelled by the barbaric acts of terrorism around the world, from Beslan to Jakarta. Nothing can be crueller than the violent, senseless and tragic loss of innocent lives. All States must work together to preserve a democratic, secure and open society. That is how we will defeat terrorism.

But we must also admit that we will never be successful if we fail to defeat the causes of terrorism. For me, it is clear: fanaticism and fundamentalism exploit people's sense of injustice and lack of hope. Poverty, oppression, insecurity, intolerance, absence of democratic structures and lack of political freedom — they are all part of the breeding ground.

The fight against terrorism must be carried out with determination. There are no short cuts: human rights must be respected; international law must be followed. Our global human rights instruments aim at protecting the individual. But just as human beings are equal, so are States, big and small. International law is the ultimate guarantee that all States, no matter their size or power, are treated equally. For the sake of all nations, we need a strong multilateral system.

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians continues to take innocent lives, causing unending human tragedy. Commitment from the parties to a peaceful solution and an end to occupation is crucial. On the Israeli side, excessive violence, extrajudicial killings, settlement activity and destruction of property must end. Israel's right and obligation to protect its people must be exercised within the context of international law. On the Palestinian side, areas of particular concern remain corruption, and security and political reform. The indiscriminate and horrendous terrorist attacks must stop, and the Palestinian Authority must do more to achieve that.

To realize the vision of two States — a viable and democratic Palestine living in peace and security side by side with an Israel within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) — the parties need to meet their obligations. The road map of the Quartet is the tool to achieve this, but both sides must demonstrate a will to use it.

In Iraq, a united international community should give the Iraqi people all necessary support for the building of an independent and democratic Iraq. To that end, the role of the United Nations is vital. What Iraq and the whole region need is not a new war, but a new peace.

In Afghanistan, the security situation remains worrying. The attacks against national and international assistance workers are unacceptable. The international community should stand by Afghanistan in building a stable, secure and democratic society.

The size and scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations have expanded dramatically. I welcome the trend towards peacekeeping operations with broad and comprehensive tasks, including the protection of vulnerable civilian populations.

Children continue to be victims of war and conflict. Nothing can be more important than the life and health of children. The late Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme used to say that it is not meaningful to talk about "my children and your children"; it is all about our children — the only tangible connection to the future that we have. Their protection should be paramount to all of us.

Four years ago, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security was adopted. It was a groundbreaking achievement. But now we need to do more to translate its common objectives into concrete improvements for women around the world.

An increasing number of United Nations and other peacekeeping missions are set up in Africa. While hardship is the plight of countless men, women and children on the continent, Africa today brings hope of a more vigorous leadership to confront its challenges. President Thabo Mbeki showed the way with his bold New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative. From that followed the creation of the African Union, which is now establishing itself as a decisive body for addressing violent conflicts.

International law should guide us in all our collective efforts to attain freedom from weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, sustainable development and respect for human rights. Our finest achievement in international law in recent years is the creation of the International Criminal Court. I call on the Security Council to consider the possibility of referring matters to the Court. Sovereignty entails responsibility. The prevention of atrocities requires international action if Governments fail to assume their responsibility.

At the Stockholm International Forum on the prevention of genocide last January, we pledged to shoulder our responsibility to protect potential victims of genocide, mass murder and ethnic cleansing. We pledged to ensure that the perpetrators of genocidal acts are brought to justice. And we pledged to cooperate in the United Nations on these efforts. Discussions on the definition of genocide should never stop us from taking action when it is called for.

The recent Security Council resolution, resolution 1564 (2004), on the terrible tragedy in Darfur is a necessary step in this direction. I particularly welcome the request to establish an international commission of inquiry. My Government stands ready to give the Secretary-General our full support in that task.

I also welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of Professor Juan Méndez as his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. That will serve to make clear the link between massive and systematic violations of human rights and threats to international peace and security.

Another issue of serious concern is the use of the death penalty. For me, as a democrat and humanist, it can never be accepted. I want us to make every effort to seek the abolishment of the death penalty.

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals are at the core of the world's efforts to put an end to hunger and poverty. The collective political will to give priority to sustainable global development, over short-term national interests, will be the decisive factor in turning promise into reality.

Rich countries must fulfil their commitments. I am proud to tell you that Sweden will reach its national goal of 1 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance in 2006. But development assistance alone will not yield the needed results. Both the developed and the developing world must move forward on a number of other issues. And Sweden will do its part.

We have translated the international agenda into national policy, giving the entire range of government activities one single objective: to contribute to equitable and sustainable global development. We will act in a coherent way with that single objective in every field, whether trade, environment or agricultural policy. But this is not enough. Other decisive areas are good governance and transparency, democracy and human rights, women and workers' rights. Let us end the blame game. Let us focus on getting the job done.

Next year, we will gather in this Hall for a summit meeting to review progress on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. By then, we will also have reflected on the findings of the High-Level Panel and the recommendations of the Secretary-General.

It will be a decisive moment for the United Nations. It will be a chance for us, the Members of the United Nations, to show that we believe in collective action and that we will shoulder our responsibility for making our international institutions stronger and more effective.

Let us not fail the United Nations at this most critical juncture. Let us not shirk our responsibilities in the face of complex new realities. Let us choose a secure and prosperous future for all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Göran Persson, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Sweden, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic.

Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Makuza (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to convey to the President my Government's congratulations on his election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

We have no doubt that his wisdom and experience will be of great service to the Organization at a time when it must make important decisions, in particular concerning the reform of the Security Council. He will surely do honour to all Africa.

I also take this occasion to express our gratitude and congratulations to Mr. Julian Hunte for the excellent quality of his presidency at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

In April this year, the whole world joined Rwanda in our observance of the tenth anniversary of the 1994 genocide, in which more than a million of our citizens — men, women and children — were massacred by the former Government, which institutionalized hatred, discrimination and sectarianism.

We thank in particular the General Assembly and the Security Council for joining us in this Hall last 7 April to pay tribute to the memory of the victims in Rwanda and to renew our commitment to ensuring that the horrors of genocide do not occur again, in any part of the world.

That tragedy of genocide and its many consequences obliged us in Rwanda to undertake the national and collective duty of examining our conscience. We believe we have learned so much in sorrow from that task that we have undertaken concrete measures in that respect.

In the process, we created the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, which has led the national dialogue over the last five years. We have also undertaken vast reforms at all levels and in many areas of national life, which, among other things, enable people to develop initiatives and to participate in decisions affecting their own development. We have thus adopted a new constitution, which, for the first time in the history of our country, was conceived by the people of Rwanda themselves and drafted according to the ideas, concerns, aspirations and priorities of the people and not according to those of so-called legal experts from other continents. This new constitution guarantees the freedoms and fundamental rights of the people, brings together universal principles and national realities, but also, and above all, offers measures to exclude once and for all from our society the poor governance that led to the genocide in 1994.

We have carried out important legal reforms that have indeed restored our judicial system. In the search for justice that will restore and reconcile our people, we have introduced traditional participatory jurisdiction — known as Gacaca — to judge the thousands of those presumed to be implicated in the crimes committed during the genocide.

We are also now transforming our economy by emphasizing innovation, competitiveness, the role of new information and communication technology and the improvement of public services as the appropriate way to achieve economic growth and lasting national development. We have carried out other reforms in the areas of education, health, security and the advancement of women in public administration to such an extent that today Rwanda leads the countries having the largest number of women elected to national decision-making posts.

Rwanda is contributing, albeit modestly, to all the peace processes underway in our region and other areas of Africa. In this context, my Government did not hesitate to respond to the appeal of the African Union regarding Darfur and sent a military mission to contribute to the efforts of the international community and the Sudanese Government to restore peace to this sorely tested region of our dear continent.

We feel that the international community also needs to engage in some soul-searching in order to reflect on the lessons to be learned from the failures of the past and to re-examine its responses to crisis situations such as the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. We should therefore ask ourselves if we really do have a system of early warning in place to detect emerging crises. Can we say that today, more than yesterday, we have the political will necessary to respond decisively and appropriately around the world to these emerging crises? Is the world's division into major Powers' zones of influence not continuing today — just as it did in 1994 in Rwanda — to prevent the United Nations from formulating just and effective responses to crisis situations?

Every Member of this Assembly is certainly aware of the magnitude and the frightening scope of terrorism as well as the challenge it poses to international peace and security. Indeed, from the Russian Federation, through Spain, Indonesia, Kenya and to the United States, terrorists are causing devastation, even using innocent women and children to achieve their unspeakable goals.

The Great Lakes region in Africa is certainly acquainted with terrorism. Indeed, the forces that committed genocide in Rwanda, namely Rwanda's former Forces armées rwandaises (ex-FAR) and the INTERAHAMWE continue to bring death and devastation with unsurpassed cruelty to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. You all certainly know of their most recent and sinister deed, carried out barely two months ago, when this same group, together with the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) rebels of Burundi, attacked a refugee camp in

Banyamulenge in Gatumba, Burundi, and massacred 160 innocent people — men, women and children — because of their ethnic origin.

The most incomprehensible and unacceptable thing for us is the well-known fact that the bases of all these groups are located in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that their leaders are well-known, but that no serious international action has been undertaken, to date, to destroy these bases and to arrest their leaders. And yet, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, almost in the very same location as these genocidal forces, there is a well-armed United Nations force, which is costing the international community a mere $700 million per year.

We need to seriously ask ourselves whether the international community has learned any lessons from the tragedy of Rwanda. In our humble view, the United Nations should assume its responsibilities and take the necessary measures to disarm, demobilize and repatriate the terrorist and genocidal groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which continue to destroy with impunity entire communities in our region and which have been the source of two wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, directly involving up to eight African countries.

My Government feels that, just as the international community has the responsibility or obligation to guarantee the protection of individuals in serious danger, it is also responsible for protecting and supporting those who have escaped from those situations. It is in this context that, since 1994, the Government of Rwanda has reserved 5 per cent of its annual budget for priority contributions to the health care and education needs of those who escaped the genocide. In the same spirit, and during the current session of the Assembly, a draft resolution will be submitted, requesting the Secretary-General of the United Nations to mobilize the entire United Nations system to give financial support to our domestic efforts, which remain, despite everything, insufficient with regard to the real — if not vital — needs particularly of the orphans, widows and victims of sexual abuse. We hope that it will receive your support.

My Government has followed with great interest the current discussions regarding reform in the Security Council. Rwanda, which has been the subject of debate almost continuously in the Council for 14 years, is more sensitive than many other nations to the need to make this powerful body of our Organization more representative and democratic. We feel, in particular, that it is high time to end the marginalization of the continents of Africa and Latin America by granting them permanent seats in the Security Council.

While emphasis is quite rightly being given to the expansion of the Council and regional representation, we firmly believe that equal attention should be devoted to improving the Council's methods of work and that emphasis should be placed on their transparency. We hope that this aspect will be taken into account by all the parties concerned; otherwise, this reform will be cut short and will not have any real impact. In particular, we are deeply concerned that an unwritten rule, nowhere to be found in print, seems to have reserved the initiative for making proposals only to the permanent members of the Security Council. Even more worrying is the apparent division of the world into spheres of influence, with each permanent member having the almost absolute and exclusive right to propose draft resolutions and presidential statements relating to its own zone of influence. This situation does no credit to the Organization and seriously undermines the credibility of the Security Council and its decisions.

My Government has taken note of the improvements which have been made towards greater efficiency in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and encourages the Office of the Prosecutor and the Registry to pursue their efforts to end the waste and corruption which have characterized the Tribunal. And it is from that standpoint that we guarantee our full support for the Tribunal in the implementation of its completion strategy. We are awaiting the upcoming conclusion of agreements regarding the transfer of certain accused to be tried, as well as some who have already been convicted and who will serve their sentences in Rwanda, which we feel is a token of trust and of restored cooperation.

In conclusion, for us, support for economic development remains one of the greatest raisons d'être of the Organization. As I speak, as members know, hundreds of thousands of people in Africa are facing hunger, poverty and disease and are living in great despair. The United Nations, therefore, needs to mobilize, concentrate and guide all our collective efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals and to pull the African continent out of its current political and economic difficulties. Here, the New

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a kind of reassuring road map and framework, that is helping us to bring about the rebirth and prosperity of Africa.

Thus, this universal family of nations should reject the current situation with half of us living in affluence, prosperity and good health, while the other half is dying of hunger and disease, which all of us together can prevent and eradicate. Let us, therefore, work all together to change this situation.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of the Rwandese Republic, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Phil Goff, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand.

Mr. Goff (New Zealand): Fifty-nine years ago the United Nations was established by nations determined to work collectively to find alternatives to conflict as a means of resolving disputes and to create a stable, secure and more just and prosperous world. Devastated and exhausted by world war for the second time within 25 years, nations put their faith in multilateralism and in this body in order to avoid future wars. The name "United Nations" evoked the unity of humankind, in which our shared needs and common humanity were more important than our differences.

It is obvious as we consider the world today that we have achieved that vision only in part. Yes, world wars have been avoided. International covenants have set out universally agreed human rights standards against which the performance of governments can be measured. International law has been developed and strengthened. As Kofi Annan emphasized this morning (see A/59/PV.3), putting the rule of law into effect at home and internationally is essential to achieving a fair, just and civilized world. Cooperation has achieved advances in meeting social, economic and environmental needs.

But much more remains to be done. War, more often within than across the boundaries of States, has taken the lives of tens of millions of people since 1945, most of them civilians. Weapons of mass destruction have accumulated and access to them has spread to more countries. New diseases such as HIV/AIDS have emerged, with devastating consequences. The gap between rich and poor countries has widened, not diminished.

This year the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will put forward proposals for reforming and strengthening the United Nations, aimed at ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in addressing these issues. It is critical that we seize this unique opportunity to institute positive reforms and not squander it by adopting narrow, self-interested and inflexible responses. Nor will a lowest-common-denominator approach achieve what we all require.

Reform is long overdue. The composition of the Security Council cannot go on reflecting the world as it was in 1945. An expanded Security Council and reform of outmoded electoral groupings is necessary for the Council to be representative of the international community as it is today. Those changes will strengthen the Council's mandate and enhance its credibility as the pre-eminent organ of the United Nations. No solution, of course, will satisfy the viewpoint of every Member nation. A willingness to compromise on a package of proposals will be essential. But clearly, enhancing the representation of areas such as Asia, Latin America and Africa must be an objective, and account must be taken of the significant contributions to the United Nations of nations such as Japan.

While the High-Level Panel will focus on reform of the United Nations and security considerations, development goals to create a fairer world and promote economic and social progress in the developing world are further vital considerations for the United Nations in the year ahead. For hundreds of millions of people, starvation, disease and poverty are more immediate threats than the concerns others of us have about terrorism and security.

We are now at a turning point in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Improving the quality and quantity of development assistance is crucial. However, real and lasting progress to meet development challenges is also dependent on building a fairer, more open and equitable global trading system. Countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) spend $360 billion each year on subsidizing agricultural production in a way that excludes opportunities for the developing world to export — not only to OECD countries, but to third markets as well. That sum dwarfs the amount the OECD countries provide in development assistance.

New Zealand welcomes the progress made at the World Trade Organization General Council meeting in Geneva in July, which put the Doha Development Agenda back on track. Agriculture is at the heart of the round; the European Union and United States agreement to eliminate all agricultural export subsidies is particularly welcome.

The United Nations must also adapt itself to the changing nature of security and humanitarian concerns. The concept of national sovereignty being paramount and standing in the way of international intervention in local conflicts cannot be sustained. As the Secretary-General has challenged us,

> "if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how *should* we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica — to gross and systematic violations of human rights that offend every precept of our common humanity?" (*A/54/2000, para. 217*)

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty concluded two and a half years ago that sovereign States have the responsibility to protect their own citizens from avoidable catastrophe: from mass murder and rape, from starvation. When they are unwilling or unable to do so, that responsibility must be borne by the broader community of nations.

We are today witnessing a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe in Darfur. The World Health Organization reports that up to 10,000 people a month are dying or being killed. The very young and the elderly are most vulnerable.

A few days ago, by its resolution 1564 (2004), the Security Council resolved to support an enlarged African Union monitoring mission, demanded that all parties cease all violence and human rights violations and threatened further steps against the Government of the Sudan if it fails to disarm the militias and protect civilians.

Within the General Assembly, countries must work together in a united and determined way to enforce those provisions and prevent the tragedy that is unfolding. History will not forgive those who stand in the way of protecting 1.5 million refugees in that region and allowing them to return safely to their homes. It is also important that those responsible for the mass murders and the abuse of human rights there be held to account for their actions. There must be no impunity for such crimes.

That is true in Darfur, and is also true of those responsible for the destruction of East Timor and the murder of people there in 1999. The ad hoc tribunals in Indonesia have failed to bring to justice those who are responsible. That failure can only encourage such people to commit further atrocities, believing that they will never be held responsible for their actions.

New Zealand welcomes the establishment of the International Criminal Court and the role that it will now play in dealing with genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. It urges all countries which have not yet done so to accede to the convention establishing that body and to recognize its jurisdiction.

In the area of conflict resolution, we face today two major challenges: in Afghanistan and in Iraq. New Zealand has strongly supported efforts to bring security and stability to Afghanistan. As a small country we have contributed more than NZ$ 80 million in military and development assistance. We welcome progress towards presidential elections next month and the essential democratic mandate that they will provide to the Government.

Strong international support, however, will be necessary to meet the challenges which lie ahead. That includes ending the production and trading of drugs. Afghanistan provides about 75 per cent of the world trade in opiates. The money derived funds warlords and organized crime and undermines the ability of the legitimate Government to function.

New Zealand deplores the violence in Iraq, which continues to harm or take the lives of so many people, and the circumstances which have contributed to that violence. We call on those responsible for taking the lives of innocent people to end their violence. They now have access to a political process which they should use to promote their views and interests. A credible election process is vital to creating an Iraqi Government which has a popular mandate. The United Nations has a key role to play in that process, but adequate security and a safe environment are first necessary for that to occur. New Zealand will continue to support the interim Iraqi authority and the United Nations in their efforts to restore security, peace and prosperity to the Iraqi people, who have suffered for so long.

In Iraq and elsewhere, close attention also needs to be given to the protection of United Nations staff. The General Assembly this year will consider an integrated security strategy for the United Nations, which will incorporate a system-wide review of the United Nations security apparatus, accountability and resources. The Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel must be strengthened and supported by all States Members of the United Nations.

New Zealand condemns all acts of terrorism and will continue to contribute strongly to the campaign against terrorism. In particular, we condemn the inhumanity of terrorists in Beslan who sacrificed children as pawns in pursuit of their political objectives. However, attempts to suppress terrorism by force will not by themselves be enough unless we also address the causes which drive people to support, finance or be recruited into terrorism.

In that regard, no action will be more important to the undermining of terrorism today than finding a just and sustainable solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. The international community must work with those countries to overcome the failure of leadership, the lack of resolve and the cycle of violence and retaliation which stand in the way of solving that conflict.

Finally, in the Pacific region, New Zealand's own neighbourhood, we can celebrate the progress which has been made in Bougainville and in the Solomon Islands in ending conflict and re-establishing the rule of law. In both cases, a concerted regional response with the support of the United Nations has been effective. In Bougainville, that response created peace from a situation where a 10-year civil war had resulted in widespread devastation and the loss of thousands of lives.

In the Solomon Islands, the intervention of the Regional Assistance Mission has restored the rule of law by its elected Government in place of the anarchy created by armed militias. More than 3,500 weapons have been collected and destroyed, social services and a credible budgetary progress restored and militiamen and corrupt elements from the police and Government arrested and charged.

Much however, remains to be done to meet the wide-ranging challenges which confront the Pacific region, including environmental threats, ethnic conflict, poor law enforcement and governance and the threat of disease. Regional solutions are being applied by the Pacific Islands Forum through greater collaboration and integration in addressing problems. International cooperation through processes such as the 10-year Review of the Barbados Programme of Action set to take place in Mauritius next year will also help.

In conclusion, 59 years from the end of the Second World War and the establishment of the United Nations, the world continues to face major challenges to its security and well-being. The opportunity exists this year for us to consider and improve the ways by which the Assembly can address the problems faced by humanity and make a difference. Success or failure to do so will be the collective responsibility of all of us.

The meeting rose at 8.10 p.m.

United Nations A/59/PV.5

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 22 September 2004, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping .... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Address by Mr. Sulejman Tihić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Sulejman Tihić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sulejman Tihić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tihić (*spoke in Bosnian; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to greet you all and express my great pleasure at having this opportunity to address this Assembly. I also wish to thank the United Nations, once again, for everything it has done and is doing for my country. Specifically, I would like to stress the importance of giving support to the returnees who were expelled from their homes.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a multi-ethnic country in which Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, Jews and many other ethnicities lived in peace and tolerance for hundreds of years. In Sarajevo and in most other Bosnian towns, one can find mosques, Orthodox and Catholic churches and Jewish temples that have stood side by side for hundreds of years. For this reason, Sarajevo is called the Jerusalem of Europe.

Preserving the multi-ethnic structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with all its characteristics and diversities, presents an historic challenge, not only to Europe, but to the whole world. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the foremost meeting point of world cultures and religions. It therefore refutes the theory of the clash of civilizations.

I would like to update you on the situation in my country, which has made significant progress over the last nine years.

The infrastructure destroyed in the war has been rebuilt and macroeconomic stability has been achieved, with only 1 per cent inflation. The banking system has been consolidated and foreign debts are being paid off. Since the post-war period, the gross domestic product has increased three times over and national reserves have increased 14 times over. Foreign currency reserves and savings are constantly increasing as well.

We are on the right path to meeting all the requirements for starting negotiations with the European Union (EU) on stabilization and association agreements. Due to the Republika Srpska entity's failure to cooperate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), we have been unable to gain Partnership for Peace membership, although we meet all of the requirements.

Strong reforms are under way in the areas of education, customs, taxes, security and the defence

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system. Many new central institutions have been set up, such as the Defence and Security Ministry, the intelligence service, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Joint Military Command and others. Compared with the approximately 500,000 soldiers of the three separate armies in 1995, the Bosnia and Herzegovina military forces now have 12,000 soldiers. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had some 70,000 soldiers in Bosnia in 1996, and the Stabilization Force (SFOR) now has about 7,000. The security situation is stable; the peace has never been broken. Since the Dayton Peace Accords were signed, not a single foreign soldier has been killed in Bosnia. Instead of being a consumer of international aid, Bosnia and Herzegovina is increasingly becoming a participant in international peace missions, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Liberia, Timor-Leste, Haiti and others.

The common foreign, security and defence policies of the European Union have enabled the EU to take the leading role in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By the end of this year, EU military forces will take over from SFOR in Bosnia.

The positive stabilization process — as well as the overall progress made not only in Bosnia, but also in the other countries created after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia — is being slowed down by an inappropriate attitude towards war crimes and war criminals. Some public and political officials are trying to find an excuse for the war crimes, saying they were committed in the interest of vital ethnic protection. Yet war criminals are treated as national heroes. This must be changed. Only on the basis of truth and justice can we build confidence and reconciliation among the people and friendly relations among our respective countries.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has an irreplaceable role to play in that process. We deeply appreciate the work it has done so far. In our view, it must finish the trials that have already begun, particularly those of the highest-level officials. Some of the cases not yet completed can be transferred only to courts of countries where the crimes happened. This can be done only when those countries are prepared to guarantee fair and correct trials.

Full cooperation with the ICTY must be an unavoidable requirement for accession to Euro-Atlantic institutions. Moreover, it is not enough to arrest and prosecute only war criminals on the ICTY's list. Local courts in our respective countries must prosecute thousands of other war criminals who are still at large, who constitute a destabilizing factor, who hinder positive processes, and who are often connected with organized crime.

In my country, we are going to establish within the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court a war crimes chamber. The chamber will take over some of the Hague Tribunal's cases, but it will also prosecute many other criminals. It is going to be The Hague in miniature. We will therefore need technical and financial support, and we will have to involve international judges and prosecutors with experience in such trials, above all those who have worked at The Hague Tribunal.

Next year will be the tenth anniversary of the genocide against Bosnian Muslims in the United Nations safe havens of Srebrenica and Zepa. The people most responsible for that genocide, as well as for all other war crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina — Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic — have not yet been arrested. Those two men are responsible for the death of about 200,000 people. From this rostrum, I call on all in authority to arrest them.

The outstanding issue of about 15,000 missing persons, whose bodies are spread among numerous mass graves throughout the country, 320 of which have been found so far in Bosnia, presents a big problem for my country. We need help in finding the missing and identifying them.

The political system set up by the Dayton and Washington Agreements played a positive role in establishing peace, reconstruction and progress in my country. However, they are now increasingly becoming an obstacle to further development and progress. The current administration in Bosnia, with a federation composed of 10 cantons, a republic and a district — strong entities and a weak State — is an obstacle in our way towards Euro-Atlantic integration. It is an extremely complicated and expensive system that is barely operational. The people, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and outside, are aware of this to varying degrees.

I believe the time is coming for domestic political representatives to start to discuss the revision of Bosnia's constitution and its compliance with international conventions. We have to create an efficient State with institutions and mandates that will enable us to become a full member of the EU and NATO. I hope we will get support and help from friendly countries and the international community as a whole. A good opportunity for this will be next year, the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. It is time for Bosnia to turn from the Dayton phase to the Brussels phase.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is sincerely and firmly committed to strengthening friendly relations with the neighbouring Republic of Croatia and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and equality. Our geographical location, history, ethnic composition and economic and infrastructure connections are leading us towards overall cooperation. We are aware that, without a resolution of disputed issues, we cannot proceed further to European integration; we already have achieved some progress in this regard.

The countries of South-Eastern Europe have made huge individual and joint efforts to achieve great progress in changing the stereotype of the region as a backward, problematic and conflict-ridden area of the European suburbs. Regional cooperation is being promoted in the areas of defence, security, border control, free markets, visa regimes, combating corruption and organized crime and the protection of ethnic and religious minorities.

The issue of borders in the region cannot and must not be opened again. We have to arrange such matters in compliance with European standards. However, we have to open the issue of cooperation with respect to borders, since it is in our common interest.

I think that the Iraqi crisis needs to be resolved simultaneously with the Palestinian issue. We therefore support the initiative of the Quartet and the road map as a basis for setting up a sincere dialogue between the two States, with United States mediation. We also strongly condemn all terrorist acts, as well as execution without trial of Palestinian religious leaders. We strongly condemn the Israeli side's construction of the protection wall.

We are happy with the consensus among Security Council members on the transfer of sovereignty from coalition forces to the legitimately elected legal and executive authorities in Iraq. We think the United Nations should take the leading role in shaping the future of Iraq. The Iraqi people need to govern their own country, and the military forces that control the territory must respect the Geneva Conventions and humanitarian law. The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq must be preserved, including sovereignty over its natural resources. We call for protection of Iraq's world heritage civilization and holy places, such as Karbala and the Imam Ali mosque in Najaf. With a view to helping the people of Iraq and contributing to the establishment of peace there, Bosnia and Herzegovina has sent a unit to Iraq to destroy mines and unexploded devices.

My country is sincerely committed to combating international terrorism and is an active participant in the international anti-terrorist coalition. Terrorism is not only a threat to peace and security; in our view, it is immoral and counterproductive. It is immoral because innocent people are killed, and it is counterproductive because terrorism cannot resolve problems. It only produces new ones. In that regard, I would like to highlight here the example of Bosnian Muslims, since we were the major victim of the aggression against Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. We managed to defend ourselves, but both during and after the war we never turned our hands to revenge or terrorism.

Allow me to review the issue of Security Council reform, as well as that of strengthening the efficiency of the mechanisms of the United Nations. The citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina know from their own experience what a lack of proper and efficient United Nations action can mean. If United Nations mechanisms were more efficient, the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have happened or, at least, the war would not have been so long. If they were more efficient, then genocide would not have been committed in the United Nations safe havens of Srebrenica and Zepa. For that reason, I want to remind everyone of the Organization's obligation to assist the survivors in those areas.

When considering the situation in the world today, the question of efficient cooperation in the area of security is inevitably raised. The Security Council needs to be the leading factor for peace and stability in the world. It has to have at its disposal mechanisms that can be operated with efficiency and speed in order to prevent conflicts from becoming military clashes.

Among other proposals, we support the initiatives to enlarge the Security Council's membership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina wants to become a non-permanent member of the Security Council. In terms of Security Council efficiency, our experience has been mostly a negative one. Through our participation in the work of the Council, we hope to prevent a repetition of our experience elsewhere in the world. Therefore, we take this opportunity to confirm our intention of putting forth our candidature for the 2010-2011 term. Bosnia and Herzegovina deserves that honour and we are determined to prove our worth.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Bosnia and Herzegovina for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sulejman Tihić, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Toledo Manrique (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to join previous speakers in congratulating you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

The world of the twenty-first century faces a paradox. It is unified globally in the areas of production, such as trade, finance and in the digital revolution of information and communication technology — yet it is divided by the increase in conflicts, civil strife and transnational terrorism, as well as cultural and ethnic violence. The world is unified by universal values, such as democracy, human rights and respect for freedom of expression and the environment — yet it is divided when democracy clashes with social demands for more jobs and less hunger.

Those contradictory trends of globalization and fragmentation jeopardize governance not only at the international level, but also within nations. Conflicts sharpen; many poor States are rocked by domestic and external violence; terrorist organizations and traffickers in drugs, weapons and persons are emerging and amassing devastating global power.

Since the end of the cold war, more than 30 civil conflicts have caused approximately 5 million deaths and created almost 17 million refugees. In 2004, the United Nations has been administering 15 peacekeeping operations and 15 special political missions. That means that 16 per cent of Member States are affected by issues undermining peace and international security.

In a context in which no single Power can assure global governance, in a world where fragmentation abets nuclear threats, both nations and peoples demand urgent decisions — decisions ensuring global governance based on international law, increased respect for the United Nations, within a renewed and strengthened multilateralism, and the reinforcement of the values of peace and international justice.

In the global era, the world requires broad consensus. Peru considers that the best solution is to be found through both change and continuity. We must stabilize the world political situation and generate an international alliance for development and social justice. We call for continuity in order to attain the goals of the United Nations. We call for peace, security, juridical equality of States, the non-use of force, the prohibition of aggression, the international rule of law governing relations among States, international cooperation, economic and social development and respect for human rights — all of which are more necessary and have more validity today than ever before.

We also propose a change of tools, mechanisms and measures. The reform of the Security Council must be tackled realistically, bearing in mind its role as a mechanism for collective security for the international community as a whole. The people want a Security Council with guarantees of legitimate and effective decisions.

Peru is a country whose diplomatic tradition, since the nineteenth century, has supported multilateralism as the best means for international decisions, particularly to promote peace and development. Peru participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations. My country is contributing military troops in Cyprus, on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we are participating in Liberia and in Côte d'Ivoire. Recently, my Government decided to send a fully equipped company to help achieve stability, security and the reinstitutionalization of democracy in the Republic of Haiti.

As a result of our long-standing participation in maintaining peace and security and in promoting development, Peru has announced its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council during the period 2006-2007. We are grateful for the considerable support that we have received and for the favourable consideration given to our candidacy.

Today, 2.8 billion people live on $2 per day; 1.3 billion people subsist on $1 per day. Moreover, in the 1990s, social inequality became more pronounced throughout the world. According to the Worldwatch Institute, that increase in inequality affected not only personal incomes, but also access to water, food and energy — public goods essential for civilized life and socio-political stability. Today, the decrease in personal incomes and the increase in inequality are colliding like tectonic plates, producing tremors of social disintegration and international conflict.

Therefore, we in the international community must understand that the peace, security and stability of the world system are not related solely to political, military or strategic aspects. Peace and security have social and economic components. Poverty and exclusion militate against peace, security and democracy. Social exclusion produces violence, instability and national and international fragmentation and renders democracy fragile. We cannot overcome that situation if we do not cause globalization to have a human face and to become a positive force that provides tangible benefits to all nations and all human beings.

The rule of law and the international legal order must guarantee access to justice and respect for human rights. The rule of law must prevent impunity. At the same time, democratic societies must make transparency and the fight against corruption true policies of the State.

Peru, before the process of recovering its democracy, was captive to corruption, systematic human rights violations and the subjugation of justice to political power. The corrupt and authoritarian Government hijacked democracy, tortured systematically and made corruption a tool of political power. Today, the free consciences of Peru demand that those responsible be brought to justice. Therefore, I appeal to the Government of Japan to contribute to access to justice by authorizing the extradition of former President Alberto Fujimori for the crimes against humanity with which Peruvian justice has charged him, including his alleged responsibility for acts of torture, forced disappearances, summary executions and acts of corruption. Democratic Peru guarantees a fair trial and due process under the rule of law. I make this appeal in the conviction that the rule of law and the international legal order must guarantee access to justice. To deny such access is tantamount to enshrining impunity, and I am sure that the international order is not prepared to consider itself an accomplice to such impunity. We hope that that will not happen.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Alejandro Toledo Manrique, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Nujoma: It is a source of pride for Africans and our friends alike to see you, Sir, presiding over the demanding business of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. You bring to your high office the immense wisdom and experience you have gained over the years as a dedicated public servant and Cabinet minister of the Gabonese Republic. You hold in your capable hands the mandate given to you by the Charter of the United Nations to give new impetus to the promotion of peace, human security and sustainable development throughout the world. I congratulate you warmly and pledge Namibia's full support to you personally and to your Bureau.

You will recall, Mr. President, the renewed spirit and firm resolve for change demonstrated by African leaders in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa. There, we stressed a new beginning for Africa in transforming the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and launching the African Union and its development arm, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We also reiterated our commitment to embrace the African diaspora in consolidating and transforming our continent.

I am, therefore, delighted to note that the outgoing President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, hails from the sister country of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean. I pay tribute to him for his excellent and successful service to the United Nations. During his tenure of office, he showed leadership and dedication to world peace, security and sustainable development.

We are gathered once again at United Nations Headquarters to reaffirm the precious ideals, principles and purposes of the Organization, and to transform them into action towards ending armed conflict, saving our children and investing resources to eradicate hunger, disease and poverty in the world.

Our illustrious and hardworking Secretary-General, my dear brother Kofi Annan, has left no stone unturned in his tireless efforts to exert his authority in conflict situations. His insistence on the centrality and legitimate responsibility of the Organization to be on the side of the poor, the weak and the needy in the world should be commended. In his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), the Secretary-General once again reminds Member States of the terrible state of the world, and offers real alternatives for world peace and security, social development financing and the mitigation of the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other infectious diseases. I commend the Secretary-General for his worthy interventions and effective leadership.

During the 1999-2000 period, Namibia had the rare honour and privilege of serving the Organization in two capacities. My country served both as a non-permanent member of the Security Council and, simultaneously, as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, whose task, among others, was to prepare for the Millennium Summit and the adoption of the historic Millennium Declaration. I was thus called upon to co-chair that Summit together with my Finnish counterpart, Her Excellency Ms. Tarja Halonen.

At that memorable Summit, the largest ever gathering of world leaders unanimously endorsed the far-reaching Millennium Development Goals and targets. Today we all remain bound by that historic and unique undertaking. Member States collectively pledged, among other things, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality and improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for sustainable development.

By endorsing those Development Goals and targets, our Governments have made a serious and irrevocable commitment, through reliable public policy interventions, to care for the millions of our children all over the world who are asking for nothing more than love, protection and a peaceful childhood.

In this undertaking, we cannot ignore the ever-widening income gap between the rich and the poor, between the industrialized North and the developing South. This situation represents a dangerous time bomb, which the world can ill afford to let take its own course. Our planet Earth is too small to perpetuate the unacceptable juxtaposition of abject poverty and abundant prosperity. We will deal with this situation effectively only when we promote mutually beneficial commercial trade between the North and the South within the framework of North-South and South-South cooperation.

I would like to emphasize that the Millennium Development Goals and targets by themselves are only declarations of intent. Our Governments must translate them into sustainable policies, buttressed by adequate financial and technological resources, to make a real difference in the lives of our peoples.

For its part, Namibia, in cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies, has adopted a countrywide programme to implement the Millennium Development Goals and targets. In addition to deploying our own resolve and capabilities, we call upon other development partners to assist us in our national efforts towards nation-building, reconciliation and transformation.

At the initiative of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Federative Republic of Brazil, world leaders converged at United Nations Headquarters on 20 September 2004 to exchange views and find workable solutions aimed at bringing an end to hunger and poverty in the world. We commend him for that important initiative, in which we participated. At the end of the meeting, a declaration was adopted, which Namibia fully supports. We call upon Member States and other stakeholders to implement it with due urgency.

The world has enormous resources with which to fight and defeat poverty, hunger and underdevelopment. In this process of dialogue, we must insist on a realistic balance between the total world spending on war and weapons technology on the one hand and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and targets on the other. What is required is political will and compassion on the part of world leaders. The debate on weapons of mass destruction must not divide United Nations Member States, but should lead nations to find and enhance peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Developed countries should consider their support to the countries of the South as an act of enlightened contribution to regional and global stability, and as a purposeful incentive to encourage increased mutually beneficial commercial trade and investment among all nations.

I wish to underline the significance of my presence at the current session of the General Assembly. Attached to my attendance are a long history, a personal journey and an unbroken link between Namibia and the United Nations over many years. I entered this building for the first time in 1960, as a petitioner before the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly.

That was my first humble but determined emergence on the diplomatic scene. I have spent many years since then, attending various United Nations debates and conferences that dealt with the decolonization of Namibia and negotiations on self-determination and independence. During those many years, I addressed some of the Security Council meetings held in respect of the question of Namibia, starting in 1971, as the first freedom fighter accorded such an opportunity.

I got to meet and know many distinguished statesmen, diplomats, fellow petitioners and eminent international civil servants in New York, Geneva, Paris and other important conference venues. My Namibian colleagues and I will always treasure the advice, support and solidarity we received from the United Nations family, and from friends the world over. Many friendly nations of the world stood firm and rendered moral, material and diplomatic support to the noble cause of our freedom and independence.

Many world-renowned revolutionaries, particularly on the African continent, rendered selfless sacrifices, not only towards the independence of our motherland, but also to free the African continent from colonial exploitation and apartheid.

I therefore would like to salute and pay homage to the visionary leaders of the African continent who shaped the vision of African unity and the continent's emancipation from the yoke of colonialism, foreign occupation and apartheid. Among them, I pay special tribute to Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana; Ahmed Ben Bella, the first Prime Minister of Algeria; Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt; Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania; Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia; General Murtala Mohammed of Nigeria; Antonio Agostinho Neto of Angola; and other African leaders and pan-Africanists.

Namibia's protracted liberation struggle was bloody and bitter. It caused the untold suffering and sacrifices of our people inside the country and those of us who were forced to spend many decades in exile. After many years of struggle, the international community finally recognized and endorsed the legitimacy of our cause for freedom, equality and justice, led by our national liberation movement, the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) of Namibia.

Namibia became principally the legal responsibility of the United Nations, and in that way a unique partnership was forged for a common cause between the world Organization and the struggling Namibian people, which endured for 30 daunting and eventful years.

On 21 March 1990, His Excellency Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, swore me in as President of the Republic of Namibia. Later in September of the same year, I returned to the United Nations to address the General Assembly and, on behalf of my people, to thank the United Nations for the special partnership and the principled support in various forms that eventually gave birth to the 160th State Member of our Organization.

I paid tribute to those United Nations civil servants and members of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) who served diligently to ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978). I also paid homage to those who died in the course of their duty in Namibia.

I wish to recall with appreciation that my initial access to the United Nations was made possible by non-governmental organizations, church groups, a handful of United Nations staff members and concerned diplomats from friendly countries. I sincerely thank them all. The Namibian people salute them and will forever honour the memories we shared. Among those many organizations, I wish to particularly single out and pay deserved tribute to the Africa-America Institute for its exceptional dedication to provide and expand educational opportunities to Africans across our continent, including Namibians, both before and after our independence. I join other African leaders in welcoming the Africa-America Institute's fiftieth anniversary education partnership campaign, which I wholeheartedly recommend for global support.

By my own decision and in compliance with our Constitution, I will be serving as President of the Republic only until 20 March 2005. I will then bid farewell to my State duties and public functions. I am looking forward to a less hectic life, but I will remain a fully engaged private citizen. I intend to undertake certain causes that are dear to my heart and be ready to assist national, regional and international efforts, especially in the areas of poverty eradication, people with disabilities, food production and infrastructure development.

At the beginning of my statement, I referred to the launch of the African Union, NEPAD and Africa's resolve to pursue a new beginning. I now want to add another crucial dimension, that of gender equality and the empowerment of women in decision-making and their election to national, regional and international institutions.

Our subregional organization, the Southern African Development Community, spearheaded this new thinking, and we are happy that the African Union has also started implementing this progressive and forward-looking agenda.

The recent inauguration of the Pan-African Parliament, which is hosted by South Africa, is a litmus test for Africa's renewal. We must not delay or fail in our joint venture to achieve the total integration of our continent.

The recognition and the full participation of women in decision-making are fundamental to Africa's transformation and industrialization. With that in mind, we proudly acknowledge the election of Mrs. Gertrude Mongella of Tanzania, who became the first President of the Pan-African Parliament. There is no shortage of competent and experienced African women to lead the way forward. The African Union Commission includes female commissioners from various African countries. Africa must place at the top of its agenda the involvement and support of women as leaders and role models.

Since the days of the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and Africa have been true partners. In the process, they have offered one another mutual support and ever increasing cooperation in the vital fields of conflict resolution, peace-building, humanitarian relief and social development. Now that the African Union has established its Peace and Security Council, in addition to NEPAD, we envisage a wider scope for cooperation and resource mobilization to plan for the prevention of armed conflicts and human suffering in Africa.

With the attainment of sustained peace and stability, Africa's economic growth and poverty eradication will become a reality and the hopes and aspirations of our people will be realized. To that end, we need continued and strong partnership with the United Nations.

From this podium and in various other forums, we have reaffirmed our belief in a peaceful, democratic, transparent and just international system. We have advocated a system that would bring the poor and the rich of the world together to save the lives of millions and pursue sustainable development and human security.

To achieve that noble objective, the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, cannot continue operating on the basis of undemocratic structures of decision-making. The Council should be reformed without delay; political will is what is lacking. We can do better. Now is the time. Africa needs its place as a key player in this world body. We demand our share of responsibility.

The current war in Iraq has divided the world, causing enormous human suffering and undermining international peace and security. There is widespread distrust among nations, and the danger of nuclear proliferation makes the situation even more alarming.

Millions of people in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes region and the Sudan, continue to experience untold suffering due to conflict and war. Namibia is deeply concerned about the killings and the human rights violations against innocent women, children and the elderly in the Darfur region of the Sudan. We call on all parties concerned, in particular the Government of the Sudan, to implement without delay all the agreements and commitments they have made.

Against that background, my Government fully supports Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) of 18 September 2004. While we support the efforts of the African Union to find a peaceful solution to that highly volatile situation, we feel strongly that the Security Council should assume full responsibility in accordance with the Charter. This problem can be resolved only through a Security Council resolution establishing a peacekeeping mission for Sudan, in particular to deal with human suffering in Darfur. In that context, as a product of the United Nations ourselves, and in the light of our commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security, Namibia is prepared to contribute a battalion to such a United Nations mission.

The United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara must be implemented immediately. Likewise, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people must be realized. We, the international community, owe it to them.

Namibia reiterates its call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba in order to allow the people of the two countries to coexist peacefully.

The global security situation is being further threatened by the emergence of mercenaries, who undermine legitimate Governments. The African continent has not been spared by this ugly phenomenon, which should be condemned by the international community.

The United Nations is the ideal place for finding solutions through multilateral negotiations and compromise. The Secretary-General needs the unwavering support of all Member States in order to play an effective role in the Middle East and Africa and in conflict situations around the world. Whether fighting poverty, HIV/AIDS or terrorism, the international community must act as one. We must stop human suffering and promote security and prosperity for all.

Namibia stands for peace, unity, stability and mutually beneficial economic partnership. Our Constitution is the primary guide we rely on in those pursuits.

My Government is implementing Vision 2030 and the successive national development plans in stages, with a view to further enhancing economic growth and improving the living conditions of our people, including by transforming our villages into viable socio-economic participants. Poverty, education, health care, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, skills development, the empowerment of women, the protection of children and assistance to people with disabilities are among the urgent national priorities covered in those people-centred government interventions.

We carry them out in partnership with business, labour and those representing civil society. Happily, the competent United Nations agencies and international experts based in Namibia are working closely with my Government to bring prosperity and transformation to Namibia and the subregion. When we succeed, Africa will benefit and the world, too, will acknowledge the shared rewards of development partnerships.

I conclude my statement in the confidence that, through the United Nations, humanity will triumph over the challenges that confront us today so that the future generations will live in peace, free from the scourges of war, poverty, hunger and disease. I believe strongly that our common goals and objectives are achievable because a people united, striving to achieve a common good for all members of society, will always emerge victorious. Long live the United Nations!

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Namibia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sam Nujoma, President of the Republic of Namibia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Mbeki: There are some matters on which we all agree. One of these is that, later this year, we will receive the important report that will be tabled by the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which was constituted by our Secretary-General. The other is that, next year, we will mark the tenth anniversaries of the Copenhagen World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Beijing World Conference on Women and discuss their outcomes. The third matter on which we all agree is that, next year, we will observe the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the historic Millennium Declaration.

We will also agree that we took all these initiatives — the convening of the social, women's and millennium summits and the constitution of the High-Level Panel — because we were of one mind that we had a number of problems that needed to be solved. In the Millennium Declaration, we used inspiring words to sum up our response to these problems. We said:

> "We have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level. As leaders we have a duty therefore to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs." (*resolution 55/2, para. 2*)

We went on to say:

> "We are determined to establish a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter." (*ibid., para. 4*)

We also said that our efforts to make globalization fully inclusive and equitable

> "must include policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation". (*ibid., para. 5*)

To this we added the commitment that

> "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty... We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want." (*ibid., para. 11*)

Naturally, we have no choice but to agree that we did say all these things and would undoubtedly agree that we meant what we said. I trust that this will not mark the end of the range of issues over which we would speak with one voice. I say this because, when I have asked myself the question "Have we achieved the goals we set ourselves?", I have found it impossible not to answer that we have failed. There may very well be others among us who will take a different view and say that a good beginning has been made and therefore that it is too early to say we have failed.

But I am certain that if we say to those affected by violence and war that we have made a good beginning towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace all over the world, they will not believe us. I am equally certain that if we say to those who go to bed hungry every day that we have made a good beginning towards freeing the entire human race from want, they will also not believe us.

I would make bold to say that the vision of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level that we enunciated in this imposing forum four years ago resonates among the ordinary people who are victims of hunger and war as a beautiful dream that will inevitably be deferred.

Does this mean that, when we made the promises we made, we deliberately intended to tell the billions of ordinary people a lie? The answer to that question is obviously "no". Did we speak as we did simply because talk is easy and cheap? Again, the answer to that question is obviously "no". The question must therefore arise as to why the grandeur of our words and the vision they paint — of a world of peace, free of war, a world characterized by shared prosperity, free of poverty — has not produced the grand results we sincerely sought and seek.

It would seem to me that the answer to that question lies in the fact that we have as yet not seriously confronted the difficult issues that relate to the uses and perhaps the abuses of power. Yesterday, in his statement on his report on the work of the Organization, our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, spoke eloquently about the 3,000-year-old Code of Hammurabi, and said: "That code was a landmark in mankind's struggle to build an order where, instead of might making right, right would make might" (*A/59/PV.3*). We took it that the Secretary-General was, in his own elegant way, drawing our attention to the central question of our day: the uses and abuses of power.

Contemporary human society is characterized by a gross and entrenched imbalance in the distribution of power. That power is held and exercised by human beings. As human beings, the powerful share many things with the powerless. Together, the powerful and the disempowered share the common human needs to eat, to drink water, to be protected from the elements, to dream, to love, to laugh, to play, and to live.

But life itself tells us that all of that describes only what human beings share. The rest, the relations among us as social beings, is defined by our varied access to power and its exercise.

Without fear of contradiction, I have said that we all agree that later this year we will receive the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. I am equally convinced that, depending on where we stand relative to the power equation, we will hold radically different views about what constitutes humanity's most serious threats and challenges, and therefore what must be changed to respond to that perceived reality.

Both the powerful and the disempowered will undoubtedly agree that terrorism and war represent a serious threat to all humanity. They will agree that we were right to make the commitment in the Millennium Declaration to work for

> "a just and lasting peace all over the world in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter" (*resolution 55/2, para. 4*).

Many of those who have already addressed the Assembly have correctly drawn our attention to many instances of terrorism and war, to which we are all opposed. They have spoken of the bombings of the United States embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and of the African and American lives those claimed; of the heinous 11 September outrage in this city; and of the acts of terrorism in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Spain, Israel, Gatumba in Burundi, Beslan in the Russian Federation, and elsewhere.

They have correctly drawn our attention to the violent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, the Sudan, Palestine, Israel, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and elsewhere, and to other unsolved problems, such as self-determination for the people of Western Sahara, that cry out for a solution.

Both the powerful and the disempowered agree that the international community must act together successfully to confront these situations and therefore the threat and challenge of terrorism and war.

However, the powerful will also make the additional determination that terrorism and war constitute the central and principal threat and challenge that human civilization faces. They will make that determination because, almost by definition, the terrorists target them simply because they are powerful; they have no logical choice but to identify terrorism as the central and principal threat and challenge they face, and to which they must respond.

Because of their place in the power equation, what they decide will necessarily represent the global decision of what constitutes the central, principal and most urgent threat and challenge to human society, necessitating various changes in the global system of governance. What they decide will translate into a set of obligatory injunctions, issued by this Organization, which all Member nations will have to accept and implement.

Again, both the powerful and the disempowered will undoubtedly also agree that poverty, want and underdevelopment constitute serious problems that all humanity must confront. Many of those who have already addressed the Assembly have correctly drawn our attention to the reality of poverty, which billions across the globe continue to experience.

Among other things, they have correctly reminded us of the fact that some countries are poorer today than they were a decade ago. They have pointed to the virtual certainty that we will fail to meet the Millennium Development Goals we set ourselves four years ago.

Both the powerful and the disempowered agree that the international community must act together successfully to confront this situation, and therefore the threat and challenge of poverty and underdevelopment. However, the disempowered, who are also the poor of the world, will also make the additional determination that poverty and underdevelopment constitute the central and principal threat and challenge that human civilization faces.

They will make the determination that, because they are the daily victims of deprivation and want, which claim the lives of millions every year — translating into cold statistics about shortened life expectancy — deprivation and want represent the central and principal threat and challenge that humanity faces, necessitating changes in the global system of governance in order effectively to respond to that reality.

But because they are powerless, those billions — the overwhelming majority of the same humanity that needs to eat, to drink water, to be protected from the elements, to dream, to love, to laugh, to play, to live — will have no possibility of persuading this Organization, laughably described in the Millennium Declaration as "the most universal and most representative Organization in the world", to translate what they have concluded into obligatory injunctions, issued by this Organization, which all Member nations will have to accept and implement.

If, for a moment, we resist the temptation to speak in parables or in tongues, for fear that we might be punished for telling the truth, we must say that this stark and simple reality reflects the distribution of power and wealth in contemporary human society.

The wealthy and powerful feel, correctly, mortally threatened by the fanatical rage of the terrorists. They have the power to respond to this present and immediate danger with all their might, and, because they are mighty, they can determine for all humanity that the principal threat to them is the principal threat that all humanity faces.

The poor and powerless feel threatened by a permanent hurricane of poverty, which is devastating their communities as horrendously as hurricane Ivan destroyed the Caribbean island State of Grenada.

But, tragically, because they are poor, they do not have the means to respond to this present and immediate danger. Neither do they have the power to determine for all humanity that what they decide is the principal threat they confront, is also the principal threat that all humanity, including the rich and powerful, faces.

In the Millennium Declaration, we spoke of the need to implement

> "policies and measures, at the global level, which correspond to the needs of developing countries and economies in transition and are formulated and implemented with their effective participation" (*ibid., para. 5*).

Perhaps the mistake we made was to assume that the contemporary distribution of power in human society would permit this outcome, and that, regardless of this fundamental consideration, it would be possible for the concerns of the poor to take precedence on the global agenda and the global programme of action.

We comforted, or perhaps deluded, ourselves with the thought that this Organization is "the most universal and most representative organization in the world" — afraid to ask the question, is it?

Every year many of us who have spoken, and will speak, from this rostrum make an annual pilgrimage to this great and vibrant city to plead the cause of the poor of the world, hopeful that this time our voices will be heard. Every year, after a few days, we pack up our bags to return to the reality of our societies, whose squalor stands out in sharp contrast to the splendour of New York and this majestic precinct that constitutes the headquarters of the United Nations.

In the aftermath, resolutions are passed. Again and again our permanent representatives, with their extraordinary and plenipotentiary powers, report that those resolutions oblige us to act to thwart the deadly plans of murderous terrorist gangs. Again and again they report that yet another appeal has been made to the mighty and the lowly alike, voluntarily to respond to the cries of the wretched of the earth.

We are truly proud and inspired to see you, Mr. President, presiding over the proceedings of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, because we know that you will discharge your obligations as a son of the poor of the world should. We are moved by the fact that you had as your predecessor President Julian Hunte, who also understood intimately what must be done to ensure that the United Nations can become, in reality, the indispensable common house of the entire human family.

As an Israeli said to us at our headquarters in Pretoria a fortnight ago, it is perhaps time that we, the poor and powerless, abandon our wheelchairs and begin to walk unaided. Perhaps that will help to build the social order of which Hammurabi — and Kofi Annan — spoke, in which right makes might and not might, right.

Mr. Mwanawasa (Zambia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guelleh (*spoke in French*): The protracted period of tension that the international community is currently experiencing underscores the need for greater cooperation and commitment. It is fortunate, therefore, that during the past year the General Assembly benefited from the capable guidance of President Julian Hunte. The wealth of experience of his successor, Mr. Jean Ping, together with his great diplomatic acumen and insight, lead us to feel confident that he is in the right place at the right time.

We pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the exemplary manner in which he has promoted the United Nations and maintained and increased its relevance for the most critical issues of the day. The degree to which the United Nations is consulted on and participates in pivotal events and the resolution of crises throughout the world is a tribute to Mr. Annan's selfless dedication to the Organization.

He is also to be commended for the closer working relationship that he has been able to foster with the private sector and civil society through the global compact, with the aim of offering help and expertise to needy communities and young people.

As the Secretary-General stated in his most recent report on the work of the Organization, the United Nations — indeed, the world — has had a very difficult and challenging year. Many of us have been traumatized by terrorism, by the brutal acts of repression that are taking place in many parts of the world and by the tense situation and developments in Iraq.

For the majority of the world's people, however, the most immediate threats are those of hunger, poverty, lack of drinking water, environmental degradation and endemic or infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS and malaria. Overall, the Secretary-General notes that we have departed considerably from the vision and spirit of the Millennium Declaration of 2000, which embodied the aspirations of our time: a world united by common values, with the primary goal of providing better living conditions for humanity, in an environment of peace and security.

Unfortunately, as the Secretary-General notes, events related to terrorism have shaken our sense of common purpose. The tragedy of 11 September 2001, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ongoing bloodshed in the Middle East and other disturbing incidents throughout the world have profoundly divided the international community about how to ensure our collective security.

While we have seen many examples of State terrorism, terrorism has become essentially stateless and nebulous in nature, and is able to spread without regard to borders or nationalities. Although there is no disputing the fact that terrorism must be confronted promptly and vigorously, the knee-jerk reaction of attempting to crush it militarily fails to address its many manifestations or get to its root causes.

We must pay special heed to our prejudices and fears as we endeavour to resolve difficult political problems that may have been building for decades.

We must also accept that terrorism is not a faith or an ideology. It may well be a tactic or a strategy of last resort on the part of those who view themselves, their faith, their beliefs or their physical environment as endangered. While we must act resolutely in confronting acts of terrorism, to do so precipitately, without examining the underlying causes, could prove destructive or even fatal. No one should excuse the brutal and heinous crimes that are being committed in so many places today, but we must acknowledge that the situation requires us to find a solution.

The international community is threatened by the instability that this phenomenon entails. We must not underestimate the importance of realistic foreign and development policies directed at resolving tensions and reducing poverty. We must find a way to bring the world together to reconcile differences and eliminate reasons for misunderstanding. The words and thoughts of the late American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, are relevant here. For him, security meant not only safety from attack by outside aggressors, but also economic, social and moral security. As he said, essential to such a peace is a decent standard of living for all individuals, for freedom from fear is eternally linked with freedom from want.

We are all aware of the commitments we made at the Millennium Summit in 2000. The critical needs and ills confronting mankind were identified at that Summit, and we committed to resolving them in various ways and according to a specific timetable. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represent a worldwide quest to eliminate poverty and hunger while improving health care, education and the environment.

Sadly, an evaluation of progress towards reaching these goals by the target dates reveals that we are making erratic progress. A recent study in Geneva found that the world is scarcely making a third of the effort necessary to achieve these modest targets. In particular, the eighth goal, which calls for a global partnership of rich and poor countries for development, envisioned a substantial increase in official development assistance (ODA), a reduction or cancellation of debts, the removal of protectionist barriers for agricultural products and free access to the markets of the industrialized countries. Needless to say, progress on this goal has been limited. It is the only goal lacking a deadline or timetable and is hampered by the apparent reluctance of developed countries to keep their commitments.

Of the 50 least developed countries (LDCs), 34 are in Africa. Although five or six African countries are close to transitioning, only one has successfully made a smooth transition. Attempts to mobilize domestic resources through the private sector will require more time and funds. Low levels of savings and investment rates testify to the huge decline in resources needed for development. Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to continually increase development assistance to this group of countries.

Africa's need for development assistance has created the impression that the continent is a major financial burden to the international community. In fact, while Africa is disproportionately aid-dependent, it does not receive a disproportionate amount of aid. Overall, as things stand, LDCs will not be able to reduce poverty, achieve universal primary education or reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. A report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) describes LDCs' woeful deficits in savings dedicated to growth, public investment and essential services. The report also states that the conclusion is unequivocal and that on the basis of domestic resources alone, LDCs cannot lift themselves out of poverty.

Today, in a post-11-September world, a new rationale for aid is emerging. Aid is increasingly seen as a potent force in the war on terror by providing support to both front-line States and weak States in which terrorism could breed. Additionally, there is a mounting recognition of endemic poverty and of the inequalities that threaten national security interests. Despite this realization, however, development assistance programmes have become more selective, aimed at a small group of countries that are in some way qualified. Nevertheless, many countries fail to qualify for this aid. Concrete actions must be taken for the sake of the millions suffering in those countries. We ignore them at our own risk.

Common sense tells us that conflict is endemic and hardly any region in the world has escaped its violence. However, the reality is that no new civil wars have broken out recently, and there has been a decline in the number of drawn-out conflicts within and between States. We notice that although the number of victims has risen sharply, the number of terrorist incidents has in fact declined. That said, fewer people are being killed by war than at almost anytime in the past century. Few wars are beginning and many old ones are ending. This is particularly true in Africa, where some seven millions souls perished in the conflicts of Angola, Congo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Somalia. With the exception of the Darfur region in the Sudan, each one of those conflicts appears to be either coming to an end, winding down or stabilizing. Of course, we are all deeply saddened by the scale of the tragedy in Darfur. This issue, however, needs to be tackled with the greatest care, clarity, fairness and seriousness. We must be cautious about making generalizations and forming prejudices too soon. We need to direct our efforts towards the right solutions.

Conflicts, of course, require weapons, and reducing this threat requires a halt to arms shipments. These shipments divert vital resources from other critical needs. The countries of Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa spend some $22 billion on arms each year, that is, more than two thirds of arms sales worldwide.

Solidifying peace in the world calls for more preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and additional peacekeeping missions. Unless fully supported by the international community through additional resources, further operations would strain United Nations planning, pre-positioned forces, logistics, procurement and command and control capabilities. What is required, therefore, is greater assistance for regional peacekeeping capabilities, particularly in Africa.

Any action undertaken must necessarily have the approval of the United Nations. This is the only path that confers a degree of legitimacy on any undertaking. Action undertaken by the United Nations implies the approval of the Security Council. Here it must be noted that the Council continues to operate in accordance with the legacy of the Second World War in terms of its structure.

Furthermore, the exponential growth in United Nations membership is not reflected in the Council. There is an urgent need for the developing world to have a stronger voice in the Council. The Council must have a more equitable and realistic distribution, in terms of both representation and composition. Security Council reform is long overdue and there is an urgent need to expand the reform in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, embracing developing and developed countries. We are pleased with the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Some of its initial soundings cover the expansion of the Security Council, recalling members' commitment to contribute to national and international peace and security. We deem auspicious the projected full review of the Council's work at the end of every decade, including a review of the manpower and financial resources of peacekeeping missions. We await the Panel's report this December to the Secretary-General, and we will consider his comments during the next session of the Assembly.

The President returned to the Chair.

Following the Arta Peace Conference, which we initiated and the outlines of which I presented to this very Assembly several years ago, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member States considered it necessary to complete this process by broadening its base. Since then, and to date, the Somali reconciliation conference in Nairobi, Kenya, under the auspices of IGAD, has achieved tangible progress, which we welcome. Particular recognition should be addressed to all IGAD member

States for their self-sacrifice and devotion, especially to our brothers from Kenya, whose good offices, patience and determination allowed the negotiations to continue even in the most critical moments. Indeed, the Somali representatives, spurred by the will of the region and the convergence of political and financial support of the international community, worked relentlessly to set up the first pillar of the Somali Government institutions — that is, the Transitional Parliament. This first stage, welcomed by the Somali people within the country and in the diaspora, and the international community as a whole, finally brought a glimmer of hope that the reign of anarchy and chaos would soon come to an end in Somalia.

The divergences of view that prevailed for a long time among the countries of the region on ways of resolving the Somali conflict have now yielded to common sense and collective resolve, to work in harmony and to collaborate in a sincere and fraternal spirit towards the ultimate goal of helping our Somali brothers achieve legitimate and lasting peace.

The misunderstandings and difficulties encountered during the process have provided an opportunity for a fresh review of the statements of the various regional actors for a clear-eyed and in-depth analysis, imbued with the genuine desire to show the solidarity of IGAD countries towards Somalia, and has made it possible to underscore the common need to help the Somali people to establish a broad-based Government that is representative and legitimate. This Conference has culminated in a Somali Parliament, where all the factions and various components of Somali civil society are represented, such as intellectuals, professionals, women and others. Last week, the members of Parliament elected a Speaker, and today they are electing his deputies before proceeding on 10 October to elect the President of the Transitional Government.

Without a doubt, and very importantly so, the facts bear out that we are today in a significantly different mood than the past, because this time the Somali people are more determined to deepen their dialogue and the reconciliation process. And as a region we are convinced that we must work together towards achieving the goals agreed upon. It is also the responsibility of the international community to act in a strong and decisive manner to assist Somalia.

In the first place, the international community must provide the necessary financial and political support to rapidly enable the new Government to create the conditions for achieving the rehabilitation of facilities needed to house the new Government; the provision of direct budgetary support to pay wages and other administrative expenditures; and the tackling of security issues head-on, in particular, with the implementation of demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programmes (DDR).

In this first six-month critical phase, the actions undertaken by the new Government will determine the authority of its legitimacy as it proceeds to consolidate the gains obtained from the reconciliation process, with the aim of addressing the formidable expectations of the Somali people.

In the second place, at the political level, it is assumed that the new Transitional Parliament will be an all-inclusive body; it will agree to swear in members of this National Assembly; and all its members will accept the primacy of the rule of law, responsible norms of behaviour, disarmament and demobilization. Any contrary attitudes, actions or activities that could undermine the efforts to pacify the country or frustrate the effectiveness of the new Government should not be tolerated or accepted by the region or by the international community.

In this respect, the Security Council, the unique body entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, may be called upon to take necessary measures in conformity with the United Nations Charter to apply the following measures in case the new State faces a resurgence of obstacles to the reconciliation process or restoration of the State. These would be the implementation of a list and a systematic regime of sanctions directed against those who would continue to undermine the Government's peace efforts.

We are deeply convinced that this is a unique opportunity for the international community to finally resolve the long-lasting conflict in Somalia. We need to acknowledge the changes that have taken place. The Somalis are determined, and the region is united. We should, at all costs, avoid repetition of the scenario we have experienced in the past. Let us seize this opportunity. Let us, together, help our Somali brothers and sisters in their quest for peace, stability, and unity.

Until now, innumerable resolutions, commitments, initiatives and peace processes to resolve the long-festering Middle East conflict remain at best rhetorical. A clear-cut vision of the two-State solution — a secure Israel side by side with a viable Palestinian State — rings hollow in the wake of a large expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, with the building of thousands of houses on land confiscated from Palestinian families. All this sounds familiar. Over the last three-and-a-half decades, we have witnessed the blatant confiscation of Palestinian land, farmlands and water resources. The daily oppression and repression of Palestinian victims is beyond comprehension. Nevertheless, the Palestinians continue to struggle against all odds to maintain some semblance of civil order.

Making an already untenable and explosive situation even worse, Israel, in defiance of international law and public opinion, has embarked on building a separation wall, which is penetrating and dividing Palestinian territory in two, well beyond Israel's 1967 borders, thus creating facts on the ground. And, as we all know by now, Israel's proposed tactical withdrawal from Gaza is not a prelude to Palestinian statehood. All these violent and deliberate actions have made a mockery of the road map, and thus, rendered it worthless; this is the same fate that met the Oslo Accords.

Abandoned by the international community, the Palestinians are struck with indefinite deprivation, a sense of hopelessness and statelessness. That being the case, this Assembly has perhaps the sad duty to pronounce itself incapable of constraining Israel, a Member State of this Organization, rather than continuing to give false hope to a people that has already lost everything.

Djibouti, strategically situated at a crossroad of the seas, and serving as a gateway to the growing African and Middle Eastern markets, has been fortunate in achieving a period of sustained growth, stability and improved governance. Many of our facilities are presently undergoing considerable improvements to respond to, and to take advantage of the growing demands. A new modern port is under construction, the first phase being an oil terminal expected to be operational by next year, followed by a major container terminal, and finally by an industrial free zone that will be the first of its kind in Africa, offering light manufacturing and value-added facilities and services in a duty-free setting, including warehousing, storage and distribution.

In this respect, we wish to express deep gratitude to the inspiring and pragmatic leadership of Dubai, our key partner in this visionary venture, that will undoubtedly put Djibouti on the map of international trade and shipping.

Djibouti seeks to improve its private sector development by reducing the cost of creating or doing business, by improving its labour force through investments in education, training, health, social protection and eliminating gender disparities. The Government is also working to strengthen institutional capacity and governance, while developing its absorptive capacity to better manage, as well as effectively utilize, donor support.

The Horn of Africa has seen its share of conflict and natural disasters. Together with our friends in the region, we are resolutely engaged in mitigating the plight of our people, reducing tensions and conflict, developing cooperation in the areas of transport, communications, health and the environment. Regional and international security issues and, in particular, the fight against terrorism, are of primary concern to the countries in the Horn of Africa. Together with our international partners, we are doing all we can in the fight against that scourge. The same holds true for the HIV/AIDS pandemic, tuberculosis and malaria. Our region has no other alternative than to strengthen cooperation in all areas — from economic development to improving confidence-building measures.

Djibouti, friend to all, enemy of none, will spare no effort to further intensify the search for greater regional harmony and cooperation, while promoting a pluralistic, open, and healthy society at home.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Djibouti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duarte Frutos (*spoke in Spanish*): Today our continent is experiencing a time of great opportunity, yet it is also beset by serious threats, including a falling standard of living for the masses, radical adjustment measures, the globalization of financial capital and a lack of access to markets in developed countries — all of which have not contributed to generating sustained economic growth, and even less to reducing poverty and inequality. The great challenge before us is to redouble our efforts daily to eradicate this cancer by strengthening public institutions and forging a new social ethic, as well as a new international order with multilateral bodies that truly contribute to peace throughout the world, human development and the sharp reduction of poverty, social inequalities and the exploitation of man by man and nation by nation.

The United Nations, this noble institution, must not lose sight of its historic memory, its raison d'être and the objectives that led to its creation, if its efforts currently under way are to result in healthy attitude changes and a greater political capacity to institute regulatory frameworks that can put a stop to economic Darwinism and conflicts throughout the world.

Today, more than ever, the possibility of building a more just world, free from such painful contradictions, depends upon the inclusion of the less developed countries in the globalized economy and the political will to overcome pure market forces. The industrialization of the United States, Germany and Japan in the nineteenth century could be described in similar terms, as could their emergence from their relative backwardness compared with Great Britain, the pioneer nation of that time.

The failure throughout almost all of Latin America to overcome its backwardness, poverty and dependency is frequently due to selfishness and historic impediments to advantageous connections between our national economies and the worldwide market. If this seems to be a recurrent condition, then we should constantly keep in mind the message of the Consensus of Brazil: we must govern globalization if we are to turn it into a source of opportunity for all, if globalization is not to be what it has become — a force synonymous with marginalization, exclusion or conquest, dependent on markets and cheap labour, which leads to a form of semi-slavery in many countries.

I wish to propose to the General Assembly joint action that can be taken in four areas.

First, social investment throughout the continent must reach levels that will make it possible to attain the Millennium Development Goals. To that end, the poorest countries, which clearly cannot obtain such levels of investment, could have recourse to a counterpart fund for social equity with soft financing coming from international organizations and unilateral contributions.

Secondly, we realize that not everything can be solved with money. Money, when it is misused, weakens and corrupts. Accordingly, we must also commit ourselves to carrying out the necessary institutional reforms to ensure the proper formulation, implementation and assessment of social policies. And we must be ready to ensure that access to the aforementioned funds will lead to wide-reaching innovations in the management of public administration, demonstrable by means of indices on efficiency and transparency.

Thirdly, international organizations must increasingly realize that economic and social reform must flow from the experience and wisdom of those countries themselves, with their own formulas that are in keeping with their cultural standards and that involve all the representatives of civil society.

Fourthly, with growing levels of poverty it is impossible to meet the burden of external debt servicing. There must be a new, realistic policy that will put forward rational terms on future payment of debt, terms that will make it possible to lay the basis for sustained and equitable development, terms which allow us to meet our commitments without pushing our people into irreversible poverty. It is important to place the needs of the poor and dispossessed over the repayment of the debt.

That is why we must imaginatively and skilfully devise alternative financing mechanisms for the fight against hunger and extreme poverty. That task requires greater intellectual resources and technical expertise and a new and fair financial architecture, not the accumulation of wealth, worship of the market or the promotion of globalization that does not allow the just distribution of the wealth produced by all of us throughout the world. We need a new financial architecture that enables us to reduce poverty and to work for the stability of the world's emerging democracies.

One year ago, my Government inherited a situation characterized by economic stagnation, recession and spreading poverty and by weak and unreliable public institutions, resulting in timid social policies that could hardly tackle the Millennium Development Goals.

Two major challenges face my country. First, the indigenous population — which in Paraguay is not large, totalling no more than 100,000 — lacks access to its most vital needs and faces the disintegration of much of its natural lands owing to the historical rule of indolent landowners, and most recently to a type of agrarian modernization that was insensitive to human dignity.

Secondly, the unconscionable face of extreme poverty in my country is that of the peasants. Today, two out of three Paraguayans continue to belong to that social sector. Likewise, one of the most significant causes of that critical national problem is the very unjust distribution of land that has existed for many years in Paraguay. That is not only an urgent and very shocking social problem, but also a political and ethical problem that is manifested in a repeated and increasingly grave struggle for land.

In the light of that situation, we propose a State with social, fiscal and environmental responsibility: social responsibility in the sense of guaranteeing health, education and basic services and avoiding concentration of profit and wealth; fiscal responsibility to avoid a deficit and chronic indebtedness, which ultimately punish social investment; and environmental responsibility to preserve nature's reproductive capacity and to ensure for future generations the right to enjoy resources not created by man.

We also propose the implementation of a national anti-poverty strategy that will channel the domestic and external resources necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The national Government has defined as a top budget priority an increase in social spending to resolutely address the problems of poverty, destitution and inequality, with the objective of reaching 40 per cent of the central administration's total public spending for next year, 2005.

For development, cooperation is not enough; there must also be access to markets on preferential terms, liberalization of the agricultural product markets and special treatment for the landlocked least developed countries, such as Paraguay, punished by history and geopolitics, which make our foreign trade more expensive and significantly reduce our competitiveness. There needs to be a compensatory framework to place my country, Paraguay, on an equal footing with other nations in terms of international trade.

In the international context, we join in the appeal for a more just and humanized international order in which the least developed are not always condemned to discrimination, indifference and backwardness. With that objective, we must move towards an inclusive multilateralism that will offer equality, rationality and justice in international relations.

Similarly — and in keeping with Paraguay's position on Taiwan in the United Nations — we once more reaffirm our conviction that the brotherly Republic of China, Taiwan, should become a full-fledged Member of the Organization, in accordance with the principle of universality and with norms of international law.

Today we have heard more of the same things we hear every year in the Assembly. But we hope that this time we can return to our countries and share with our peoples the news that finally, in New York, the world's leaders have taken important steps forward in alleviating — even if just a little — the pain, sorrow and hopelessness of the millions of human beings who live on Earth. I am confident that God will give us the wisdom and the strength necessary to lead our countries on the path of freedom, peace, development and justice.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Musharraf: Allow me at the outset to express to you, Sir, our warm felicitations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. We congratulate Mr. Julian Hunte on his successful stewardship of the fifty-eighth session of the Assembly. I also reaffirm our deep appreciation for the wise leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his services for the cause of peace and progress in the world.

A profound transformation is under way in international relations. The dangerous balances of the cold war have been replaced by the complex and equally dangerous realities of our world today. It is a world marked by intensifying globalization of economies, production, trade and information, on one side; and by terrorist violence, poverty and disease, on the other.

The growing asymmetries in power among States, discrimination in the dispensing of international justice, repression of peoples' legitimate aspirations and growing socio-economic disparities have precipitated new threats to international peace and to international security: the threats of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and imploding States. The world today sees turmoil and upheaval everywhere, especially in the third world, and more specifically in the Muslim world. Too many fronts have been opened and too many battle lines have been drawn. The time for closing fronts has come. The world today is crying for peace, reconciliation and reform. Our objective today has to be harmony through reconciliation and accommodation, globally and regionally.

Terrorism poses the most urgent threat to many countries, including the most powerful States. For many of us, the terrorist threat is very close and may be very personal. Terrorism threatens Pakistan's vital national interests and objectives. We have thus participated actively in the unprecedented global campaign against it. Pakistan has led the way in that campaign. Our counter-terrorist campaign is ongoing.

Global cooperation against terrorism has been highly successful. Determined and collective action has contained and disrupted the violent agendas of the terrorists. We are winning the battle against terrorists. However, what we are doing is insufficient to win the ultimate war against them. The immediate anti-terrorist response has to be accompanied by a clear long-term strategy that strikes at the root of the problem if we are to ensure final success against this scourge.

I have proposed a two-pronged strategy of enlightened moderation to overcome terrorism and prevent a clash of civilizations. The most recent Islamic Summit, in Malaysia, endorsed that plan, which involves, on the one hand, internal socio-economic reform in the Muslim world and, on the other, active support from the major Powers to ensure political justice and socio-economic revival for all Islamic peoples. While the Islamic world has taken its first step in the form of nominating a Commission of Eminent Persons to propose measures for a renaissance in the Muslim world, the major Powers of the West have yet to show movement in seriously trying to resolve internationally recognized disputes affecting the Muslim world.

The industrialized world must support the endeavour to bring about an Islamic renaissance, especially through adequate financial and technical assistance and larger trade opportunities. More important, justice must be offered to Islamic peoples in the form of the resolution of all outstanding international disputes which affect Muslims. There is no time to lose. Action has to be taken before an iron curtain finally descends between the West and the Islamic world.

The tragedy of Palestine is an open wound inflicted on the psyche of every Muslim. It generates anger and resentment across the Islamic world. Continued Israeli violence and the Israelis' erection of the illegal separation wall, usurping more Palestinian land, as well as suicide attacks by misguided Palestinians, are frustrating the prospects of peace and prolonging the agony of the Palestinian people. While Pakistan stands for peace, recognizing the right of Israel to exist as also the right of the Palestinians to have their own homeland, we can never accept the usurpation of additional Palestinian land. Israel has no right to erect its separation wall beyond its 1967 boundaries. Pakistan calls on Israel to withdraw the wall from all occupied Palestinian lands, taking it back to the pre-1967 boundaries. We also call on Israel to stop the daily atrocities against Palestinians. Pakistan also appeals to President Yasser Arafat to use his influence to reciprocally halt the intifada and give peace a chance.

A major responsibility rests with the Quartet, and in particular with the world's greatest Power, the United States, to secure a fair and peaceful solution to the problem, realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, harmony and security. The United States can and must play the role of a just broker of peace. Peace must succeed in the Middle East; failure is no longer an option.

It has always been my conviction that Pakistan and India can resolve all their differences, including over Jammu and Kashmir, through a sincere dialogue. The dangerous confrontation of 2002 and the three wars prior to that between our two countries have demonstrated that there is no military solution to our problems. The aspiration to peace enjoys popular support in Pakistan and, I believe, in India as well. Neither country can achieve its ambition for social and economic progress in the absence of peace. We must achieve peace for the sake of the impoverished people of South Asia — for their development and prosperity.

After several aborted attempts, Pakistan and India have been able to initiate confidence-building measures and a composite dialogue this year to address all outstanding issues. Pakistan has pursued this process with complete sincerity, giving bilateralism a final chance. We feel that the dual channels of confidence-building measures and the dialogue process must proceed in tandem. We also are firmly committed to resolving all disputes with India peacefully, including the Kashmir dispute. That issue cannot be ignored. Its resolution cannot be delayed inordinately. We desire a resolution for Kashmir which is just and acceptable to India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir.

We also seek strategic stability with India. I am glad to say that up until now, the normalization process has progressed well, in a cordial atmosphere. Now that the negotiations are entering the difficult stage of grappling with solutions to previously irreconcilable disputes, Pakistan hopes that India will show the same sincerity, flexibility and boldness that Pakistan will demonstrate. I look forward to my meeting the day after tomorrow with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. I would like to convey to him that this is the moment for peace; we must not allow it to slip away.

Iraq has taken a serious turn, to the anguish of the entire world community. It is imperative that together with closing the Palestine and Kashmir fronts, we also wind down the Iraq confrontation. Pakistan stands for restoration of peace and stability in Iraq to ensure its unity and territorial integrity. That can only be achieved through handing over governance authority to the people of Iraq and allowing them full control over their natural resources. Internal law and order and security can be best promoted by local Iraqi police and militia, who need to be built up expeditiously.

At an opportune time, and at the request of the people and Government of Iraq, the Muslim world could play a role in bringing peace and harmony to this conflict-torn nation.

The forthcoming elections in Afghanistan will be an important landmark in the country's progress towards democracy and stability. Pakistan will do all it can to prevent terrorists from using our territory to disrupt the Afghan election process. The subsequent parliamentary elections in April 2005 would also augur well for self-governance in Afghanistan. While the political channel is progressing well — and we wish President Karzai all success — the process of building the Afghan National Army and reconstruction efforts need to be accelerated in order to install durable peace in Afghanistan.

In our globalized world, peace and development are interdependent, now more than ever before. Despite dynamic growth in some parts of the developing world, economic and social disparities are increasing. The rich are richer; the poor are poorer. Over 2 billion people on our planet — a quarter of the world's population — live in abject poverty, afflicted by hunger, disease and conflict. Islands of peace and prosperity cannot coexist for long within oceans of instability and poverty.

A bold and innovative global strategy is required to redress the growing inequalities in the world. Good governance is a precondition for development; but the need to rectify the glaring inequities and imbalances in the international financial and trade systems is equally essential.

Official development assistance can and must be doubled. Innovative ways can and must be adopted to generate the financial resources required for development. The billions transferred abroad by corrupt leaders should be returned to the looted countries to finance poverty alleviation, education and health. International investment flows should be consciously directed to the poorer developing countries, where such funds could unleash the latent power of the poor for consumption and production.

We also know by now that trade, and not just aid, is the way to promote growth and to benefit from globalization. However, it has to be made more equitable. Unfair agricultural subsidies should be eliminated and high and escalating tariffs that discriminate against the products of the poor should be removed. Special and differential treatment should be offered to disadvantaged developing countries. In my view, we need more than a level playing field; we need a field tilted in favour of the developing countries.

Unless the world's leaders generate the political will required to agree and implement those measures urgently, the Millennium Development Goals will remain a mirage.

In Pakistan, we are well on the way to transforming our country into a modern, progressive, tolerant, democratic, Islamic state, reflecting the vision of our founding father, Quaid-e-Azam. Democracy has been restored in Pakistan. The people have been empowered through a revolutionary local government system. Our women have been empowered. However, like other developing countries, Pakistan confronts several challenges. But, we are confident of success. Our governance is good. Our national priorities are absolutely clear.

Today, there is welcome resurgence of support for multilateralism. This must be a multilateralism based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, a cooperative and democratic multilateralism. It must seek just, peaceful and durable solutions to conflicts and disputes. It must promote a programme for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. It must foster global development and global prosperity.

All our collective aspirations can best be pursued within this world Organization. The United Nations must be strengthened and revitalized to respond to the challenges of twenty-first century.

The United Nations Security Council should become more effective, democratic and representative. There is no agreement on the aspiration of a few States to acquire permanent membership in the Security Council. The overwhelming majority of States are against the creation of new centres of privilege. The Council should be enlarged to ensure the representation of the mostly small and medium States which have joined the United Nations over the last three decades. We have to consider new ideas to craft a consensus on the enlargement of the Security Council.

Pakistan believes that a new consensus on peace, security and development, can and should be achieved on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations next year. The summit meeting suggested by the Secretary-General for next year must lead to a negotiated final document adopted through consensus. That historic summit will, I hope, and Pakistan hopes, create a new paradigm to achieve universal peace and prosperity.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Fayssal Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Vike-Freiberga: I wish I could begin this address on a more optimistic note, but since we last convened at the General Assembly one year ago, many dramatic and disconcerting events have occurred on the world stage. I refer in particular to the indiscriminate and brutal terrorist attacks on civilians all over the world: in Russia, Spain, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and many other countries. I refer to the targeting of children and their parents at schools, on buses and on aeroplanes. I refer to the almost daily bomb blasts on busy city streets, in marketplaces and in residential apartment buildings. I refer to the sadistic pride and relish with which terrorists have been filming the shooting, throat-slashing and decapitation of their victims.

The purposeful torture and killing of civilians is one of the basest forms of human barbarity. It is a crime against humanity, along with ethnic cleansing and genocide. Unfortunately, terrorism is not disappearing from the news headlines of the twenty-first century. Instead, it is becoming the principal method of warfare used by disaffected groups seeking to achieve their political ends and to blackmail national Governments. Nothing can justify the use of such means. Any seemingly noble ends can only be discredited by using terrorism to further them.

Frequently, countries facing terrorist attacks have been using vastly superior military capabilities to strike hard at real or perceived terrorist targets. Too often, however, those strikes have had an undesirable side effect of their own: the further wounding and killing of civilians and the additional destruction of property. Such strikes have done nothing to diminish the deep-seated feelings of resentment of disaffected populations. The events of the past few years, and indeed of the past few decades, point to the stark and sobering reality that the military option alone has not been effective in rooting out terrorism and that terrorism has not been an effective means for achieving political aspirations and goals.

Such never-ending cycles of killing and mounting mutual hostility will cease once and for all only when the parties involved forsake the use of violence. In the Middle East, Latvia views the road map for peace as the only feasible means of obtaining a cessation of hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. My country encourages the interested parties to do their utmost to de-escalate tensions and resume the peace process.

In Iraq, the United States-led coalition forces have handed over power to an interim Government, but security problems are hampering the reconstruction of the country and threaten the viability of free and fair elections this coming January. The transition in Iraq will require continued international assistance, and I encourage the United Nations to assume an active role in that regard.

Afghanistan is due to experience its first ever elections next month. Latvia hopes that the historic event will not be derailed by violent attempts to disrupt the democratic process in that country. Latvia is ready to continue supporting international efforts to provide peace and security in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

Ten years after the human catastrophe in Rwanda, we are again confronted with the systematic rape, torture and killing of civilians, in the Darfur region of the Sudan. Those crimes have occurred on such a wide scale that they might be classifiable as ethnic cleansing and genocide. Latvia welcomes the mediation efforts of the African Union and encourages all parties involved to ensure that no further harm comes to the civilians of the region. My country supports Security Council resolution 1564 (2004) of 18 September, which urges the Sudanese Government to act decisively to stop the violence.

The United Nations faces the prospect of establishing a new peacekeeping mission in Sudan, in addition to the 17 field operations already on the ground. During the past few months alone, two new Missions were established, in Burundi and Haiti, while a third was expanded in Côte d'Ivoire. The United Nations peacekeeping budget for next year may nearly double as a result.

Latvia is deeply committed to the United Nations and to effective multilateralism as a central element of United Nations activities. Latvia believes that the United Nations must maintain its crucial role in the mediation of international disputes and that Member

States must summon the collective political will to support the United Nations as a truly credible force for peace.

The Security Council has been the principal forum in which the countries of the world deliberate together on matters of peace and security. Latvia believes that the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform must continue its activities and come forth with proposals on how to make the Council more representative of today's political and economic realities, how to provide the Council with greater legitimacy and how to render it more effective. A serious debate should be continued regarding the enlargement of the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. Countries such as Japan or Germany can and should play an increasingly stronger role in this framework in view of their substantial contribution to United Nations activities and commitments.

Proposals for enhancing coordination between the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council have made little progress. Overlapping mandates and the duplication of efforts continue to reduce the efficiency of the United Nations. The economic and social programmes of the United Nations need to be reformed, as well. For example, why are the issues of the Economic and Social Council reviewed four times a year, when twice a year might be sufficient? Combined with the restructuring of the Economic and Social Council's functional commissions, such a reduction of redundancy in the review process could free up vital financial and human resources for important economic and social development programmes in the developing countries that need them most.

Latvia recognizes the important role of the United Nations and other international organizations in promoting worldwide development and reducing poverty. Having regained its independence only 13 years ago, Latvia is gradually completing the transition from a receiving to a donor country. We are grateful for the valuable assistance that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has provided to our country since 1993, and we are pleased that UNDP has extended its mandate until the end of 2005. Although the amount that Latvia is contributing to worldwide development assistance is not very large at the moment, we are committed to allocating no less than one third of 1 per cent of our gross national product to development assistance by 2006, as required of all the European Union's member States.

Latvia's priority areas for development cooperation centre around the promotion of democratic and civil societies, economic development, environmental protection and other issues in the countries neighbouring the European Union, particularly Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, to name some of the countries to which Latvia has already provided bilateral technical assistance.

Latvia is eager to reduce the divides between the developed and the developing world. The industrial society into which we were born has been characterized by the heavy machinery and tools that have marked human progress over the last two centuries. Now this society is evolving into an information and knowledge society, with innovation as an important engine of growth. Latvia has been actively involved in the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and considers it an honour to chair the Preparatory Committee of the second phase of the Summit, which will take place in Tunis in November 2005. The WSIS process should be an integral part of the international community's efforts to eradicate poverty as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals, which will be reviewed periodically until 2015.

Although the delegations here today come from many different backgrounds, practice different faiths and speak different languages, all of us in this room share the same desire to make our world a better, cleaner, more peaceful and more prosperous place to live in. We share a world view on what it means to be a human and on the inherent value of each human life. The more we strive to enshrine such values as tolerance, compassion and mutual respect, the more human and the more humane our societies will become.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Mugabe: I am delighted to congratulate Mr. Ping, a distinguished son of Africa, upon his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Indeed, at a time when the community of nations has committed itself to paying due attention to issues that relate to development in Africa through support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other mechanisms, his presidency gives us the hope and confidence that our concerns and aspirations and those of others will remain high on the agenda of this body. Let me also express our sincere appreciation to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for the efficient and exemplary manner in which he conducted the business of the fifty-eighth session.

At the fifty-eighth session, I spoke alongside others about the need to reform the United Nations and its related bodies so as to make them more democratic. I stressed the perils inherent in the status quo, particularly with regard to the dominance of global politics by one super-Power and its closest allies. While we welcome the current debate on enhancing the authority and role of the United Nations, we wish to stress the need to address the core issue of the democratization of international governance. Debate on the reform of the Security Council has been too long drawn out because of attempts calculated to protect those whose interests are best served by the status quo.

Ironically, it is some of those same forces that, since last year, have been raining bombs and hellfire on innocent Iraqis purportedly in the name of democracy. Iraq today has become a vast inferno created by blatant and completely illegal and defiant acts of aggression by the United States, Britain and their allies, in the full trail of which the world has witnessed mass destruction of both human lives and property, and with them our human rights, values, morality and the norms of international law as enshrined in our Charter. We are now being coerced into accepting and believing that a new political-cum-religious doctrine has arisen, namely, that there is but one political god — George W. Bush — and that Tony Blair is his prophet. It is the Koran writ anew in Baghdad.

The United Nations Charter remains the only and most sacred document and proponent of the relations of our nations. Anything else is political heresy.

We note that the Secretary-General has placed before the General Assembly the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations. While civil society makes a significant contribution to the work of the United Nations, we hope that any arrangements that will eventually be agreed upon will recognize that the United Nations remains an inter-State and intergovernmental body. It is also our expectation that the conclusions of the debate will recognize the different levels of development of civil society in different parts of the world.

As we prepare for the mid-term review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration in September 2005, it is apparent that many developing countries, including my own country, Zimbabwe, may be unable to meet the goals and targets set, as our subregion of southern Africa has in recent years experienced extended and successive periods of inclement weather, principally droughts, that have wreaked havoc upon our economies and accordingly diminished our capacity to achieve the Millennium Declaration targets. The situation, particularly with regards to the health and education sectors, has also been worsened by the brain drain and the devastating effects of the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

In that regard, Zimbabwe welcomes the continuing efforts of this community of nations to find solutions to the scourge of HIV and AIDS that has ravaged our peoples and economies. At the national level, we have taken measures, within our limited means, to combat the pandemic. We are also coordinating our efforts at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) level. Regrettably, we continue to see an unfortunate and futile tendency to use assistance in this area as a reward for political compliance and malleability, making it unavailable to countries whose Governments are deemed "inconvenient". Let it be realized that the pandemic does not respect boundaries and that these self-serving, selective approaches will have little or no meaningful results.

Zimbabwe has also had to withstand unprovoked declared and undeclared sanctions, imposed by Britain and its allies, which are bent on bringing down our legitimately elected Government. Mr. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, has arrogantly and unashamedly announced in his Parliament that his Government was working with Zimbabwe's opposition party to bring about regime change. Once again, the lawless nature of that man who, along with his Washington master, believes he is God-ordained to rule our world, has shown itself. Regime change is the inalienable right of the Zimbabwean people, who, through their sovereign vote, can make and unmake our Governments.

In any case, we reject completely the assertions of, and pretence to, democracy by our former colonial masters, whose undemocratic regimes we taught the lesson of one man — or one woman — one vote through our armed liberation struggles.

As we in Africa look at the situation here in the United States, we are aware of the plight of the black people — Afro-Americans — of both yesterday and today and of the semi-slave, half-citizen status that has been their burden. Do the blacks in the United States have the same political, social and economic rights and status as their white counterparts? When we will we ever have a black — African-American — President of the United States? Never, ever. Why?

I wish to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my Government and that of the people of Zimbabwe for the humanitarian assistance we received from the international community during our period of need. Without such support, we would not have been able to avert a major catastrophe.

I am pleased to inform you, Sir, that we have, in spite of the sanctions and evil wishes of Britain and its allies, now emerged from that difficult phase. We had a relatively good agricultural season this year, and our land reform programme has begun to make a significant contribution towards the turnaround of our economy. Despite the partial drought at the beginning of the season, we have managed this year to realize a good harvest — certainly one good enough to ensure that we meet our food requirements until the next season. We plead with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stop its strange political mouthings, lies and fabrications about our situation. Our own regional organizations know the truth about Zimbabwe. We urge the IMF to listen to them, and, for once, to be clean.

My Government is determined to eliminate corruption and its corrosive effects on national development efforts. After signing the International Convention against Corruption in November last year, we put in place legal and administrative measures that have already arrested a growing and deliberate tendency to circumvent normal business practices, particularly in the financial-services sector. We have, however, experienced some setbacks in our efforts, as some countries, particularly in the developed West, continue to provide safe havens for fugitive economic saboteurs from our country.

In March next year, Zimbabwe will be holding its sixth democratic parliamentary elections since independence in 1980. Those elections, like others before them, will be conducted in accordance with our national laws and the SADC principles and guidelines governing democratic elections, recently adopted by our subregion. We do not need any lessons from the Netherlands or its imperialist allies from the European Union on this question. Zimbabwe will indeed welcome to the elections those observers whose sole and undivided purpose is to observe the process and not to meddle in the politics of the country.

The fight against international terrorism has exposed the duplicity and insincerity of erstwhile leading democracies and human rights monitors with regard to the question of the observance of human rights. We have seen established international conventions thrown to the dogs, and resolutions of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies on this issue have come to naught.

We are seriously concerned at the fact that the United Nations, the pre-eminent instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security, watched helplessly while Iraq was unlawfully attacked and plundered by the United States and United Kingdom-led so-called coalition of the willing. Such belligerent, gunslinging diplomacy and the illegitimate territorial occupation of the State of Iraq are blemishes on the fair-play image of the United Nations.

While the sadistic scenes from Abu Ghraib remain vivid in our minds, other places in Iraq, as well as Guantanamo Bay, have provided useful samples of the Western concept of respect for human rights. Let me say once again that the West should spare us their lessons on human rights. They do not have the moral authority to speak about, let alone parade themselves as torch-bearers of, human rights.

Zimbabwe remains deeply concerned about the situation in the Middle East. We continue to be revolted by a situation where the collective decisions and authority of the United Nations are disregarded with impunity on account of big-brother support. We demand an immediate lifting of all restrictions illegally imposed on the Palestinian people, which have seen President Yasser Arafat remain a virtual prisoner of foreign occupation. We welcome the recent opinion given by the International Court of Justice that found the construction of the Israeli wall to be in contravention of international law, and the subsequent General Assembly resolution that demanded an immediate halt to that monstrosity.

As the Assembly is aware, the African Union earlier this year established its own Peace and Security Council to seek and promote African solutions to African problems. Already, the Council is seized with the matter of the crisis in western Sudan. Those efforts need the support of the international community.

Let me conclude by assuring Mr. Ping of my country's support as he presides over the work of the General Assembly at this session. I wish also to reiterate my country's commitment positively to contribute to the fulfilment of the aims and purposes of the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Mr. Robert Mugabe, for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I am delighted to be participating, for the first time, in the deliberations of the General Assembly as head of State and Government of the Republic of Malawi.

I should like to begin by joining others who have spoken before me in congratulating Mr. Jean Ping on his assumption of the high office of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I have no doubt that his election will provide an opportunity to increase global awareness of the enormous challenges that Africa and other less developed regions of the world are facing. I hope that, through him, the opportunity for the poor countries to fully participate in world economic prosperity will be enhanced.

I also wish to avail myself of this opportunity to pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, for guiding the work of the fifty-eighth session with admirable skill and pragmatism.

We also salute Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the dynamic leadership skills that he continues to display in steering the affairs of the Organization.

I have entitled my statement "Sharing global prosperity". I have done so in order to underscore the fact that one of the most daunting challenges facing the international community today is to achieve a balance in economic transformation and growth between the rich and the poor countries so as to eradicate poverty among the latter.

In looking at the future of the United Nations, we need to take stock of the response to world poverty. I am aware that several attempts have been made by the international community to alleviate poverty — and the goal is still being pursued —but the results so far have been dismal. During the past 30 years, for example, the number of least developed countries has risen from 25 to 49. This means that globally, economic growth is in reverse gear. Among the questions we are asking with regard to the sharing of global prosperity is this: why are the industrialized countries more prosperous, while in Africa and the rest of the developing countries poverty is increasing? In other words, why has globalization failed to achieve a more equitable distribution of global prosperity?

In Malawi we have discovered that we need to seriously transform our economic structures in order to begin to provide and produce new wealth. This can be achieved by transforming the abundant agricultural commodities, raw materials and minerals into goods that can be traded globally. It is only by creating new wealth in rural areas that we can effectively eradicate poverty.

Our major strategy is to gain a share in global prosperity by transforming Malawi from being an importing and consuming country to being a predominantly producing and exporting country. In other words, we must begin to position our economy to take full advantage of global trade. This will be achieved through intensive industrial research and the application of science and technology to the specific conditions in my country.

Malawi — as in the case of most African countries — is richly endowed with a wide range of agricultural primary commodities, good soil and water resources that can enable us to develop viable agro-processing and manufacturing industries. The critical issue for us in Malawi, therefore, is the creation of new wealth as the basis for poverty reduction. In order to do that, we must encourage significant domestic savings, as well as inflows of resources, especially foreign direct investment.

We in Malawi estimate that in order to alleviate poverty, we need to achieve an annual growth rate of at least 6 per cent over the next decade. In order to achieve that, we are determined to create conditions for sustainable macroeconomic growth through fundamental policy reforms to improve economic and political governance. We have put in place measures for the reform of the public sector, the agricultural sector and the private sector.

We are also determined to improve good governance by stamping out corruption. To that end, we have adopted a zero-tolerance stance with regard to corruption. I am therefore happy to have signed, yesterday, the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

Malawi is cognizant of the fact that our national vision must be fully supported by the international community. That is why Malawi joins the call for better market access and lower tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in industrialized countries.

Malawi would therefore like to stress the need to advance the dialogue in the Doha development agenda. For their part, the industrialized nations need to seriously address the major concerns of the poor economies. The challenge for industrialized countries is therefore to share with the poor countries the prosperity that comes about through globalization, by assisting us to stand on our own and to develop appropriate technologies for transforming our agricultural raw materials, minerals and other natural resources into wealth. In Malawi, we believe that a partner who walks with you side-by-side down the road is better than one whom you have to carry on your shoulders. We want to walk with the industrialized nations; we do not want to be carried on their shoulders.

Some positive efforts that Malawi welcomes towards global equity include the various initiatives taken by the Group of Eight countries aimed at addressing some of the concerns to which I have just referred. Among those are the United Kingdom's decision to significantly increase its aid and technical assistance to Africa; the reaffirmation of strong support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development; the decision by the United States Government to extend the African Growth and Opportunity Act from 2008 to 2015; and the European Union's "Everything But Arms" initiative, which seeks to enhance opportunities for increased access for African exports into the European market.

Those initiatives are, indeed, encouraging, and my Government fully appreciates them. I wish, however, to appeal for those noble promises and commitments to be matched by action. We need proof that actions speak louder than words.

The management of foreign debt is another positive way in which global prosperity can be shared. Our concern is that, in spite of numerous initiatives aimed at finding a durable solution to the debt problem, the world is nowhere near that solution. My Government is still allocating a significant amount of our resources to debt-servicing at the expense of investment in infrastructure, production and income generation. Such diversion of resources has led, among other things, to the deepening of poverty and a lack of significant macroeconomic growth.

However, Malawi, like other eligible African countries, had welcomed arrangements for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. But the conditions for reaching the decision and completion points are so arduous that only a few countries in sub-Saharan Africa have managed to reach the completion stage. We believe that the preconditions for the HIPC Initiative are unrealistic. Surely, less stringent conditionalities would have enabled more countries to succeed.

That notwithstanding, Malawi welcomes the measures by some bilateral donors to respond to the external debt crisis. In particular, I must mention the Government of Japan, which, a few weeks ago, cancelled a debt Malawi owed it, amounting to $256 million. I take this opportunity to thank Japan most sincerely for that gesture. We hope that other industrialized countries will follow this example.

I referred earlier to the need for adequate donor support to sustain national initiatives. In that regard, I believe that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) provides a framework for sharing the responsibility for economic development between Africa and the rich countries. It is for that reason that Malawi has acceded to NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism in a bid to put in place internationally accepted political and economic good governance. Our accession to the African Peer Review Mechanism is also a demonstration of our confidence in the NEPAD programme as a tool to enhance Africa's effective participation in global prosperity.

Let me now turn to a global challenge that threatens all development efforts. This is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to pound incessantly upon the African economies, destroying the capacity of many countries to achieve sustainable economic development. Because it affects the most productive segment of our labour force, we are losing more qualified and experienced personnel much faster than we can train new ones.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a human tragedy of unimaginable proportions. Experience in dealing with this disaster in my country has taught us that HIV/AIDS is a medical crisis, an economic crisis, a social crisis and a political crisis. It is a medical crisis because no cure has yet been found for HIV/AIDS. It is an economic crisis because it is depleting financial and human resources for development while also devastating our national capacities for good governance. HIV/AIDS is a social crisis because of the stigma that makes the affected unable to be integrated into normal day-to-day relations as well as in the work places. HIV/AIDS has also created a large number of orphans that need to be cared for. HIV/AIDS is a political crisis because it threatens democratic institutions by killing politicians and others who are the voice of the people.

Therefore, in order to deal with this pandemic, we have learned the imperative of adopting a holistic approach. It is for that reason that we appeal to the United Nations to collectively raise new awareness, new assumptions and new solutions. To that end, the United Nations ought to redesign its policy in providing support, care, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, alongside the provision of adequate, nutritious food and a proper diet.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to raise another concern I have concerning the efforts towards sustainable growth and the development of the world. This relates to the need for world peace. One can hardly emphasize enough that, without global peace, there cannot be global prosperity. In that regard, I would like to welcome the efforts made by the Secretary-General, jointly with the Security Council, in taking a number of decisive steps towards conflict prevention, resolution and management around the globe.

Turning to the specific issues of peace in Africa, I am concerned that sub-Saharan Africa has been and continues to be one of the most unstable and conflict-prone regions of the globe. The region also happens to be home to most of the world's poorest people, who are living below the international poverty line.

The conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, in particular, is yet another sad chapter in the history of sub-Saharan Africa and one that the African people can ill afford. Africa and the international community must find quick and lasting solutions to the crisis in the Darfur region.

I would like to conclude my statement by assuring the General Assembly that my Government fully endorses the proposals to reform the United Nations. We share the belief that a more representative and democratic United Nations will enhance the efficiency and credibility of this global Organization. It will also enhance the efforts towards a just and more equitable sharing of global prosperity.

May God bless the United Nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Canada.

Mr. Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Right Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Martin (Canada): I want to talk today about United Nations reform, particularly about the way we should serve and the way we should do business if the United Nations is to play the role we want it to in the twenty-first century.

The world is organized into independent States and the primary obligation of Governments is to look after their own people. This presents us with a fundamental dilemma, for unless we also act collectively on the basis of our common humanity, the rich will become richer, the poor will become poorer, and hundreds of millions of people will be at risk. Thus, we need institutions whose primary obligation is to our common humanity. Herein lies the importance of the United Nations. It comprises Member States, but its mission is, indeed, to serve the world's peoples. Its Charter makes this very clear:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations [are] determined ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women."

Others, quite properly, will talk about structural reform. But today I want to talk about reforms designed to put our common humanity at the centre of the agenda of the United Nations.

Canada sees five areas where bold steps are required. The first area is the responsibility to protect — the need to develop the rules and the political will that would allow the international community to intervene in countries to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe.

Darfur is a human tragedy of immense proportions.

(*spoke in French*)

We welcome the Security Council's support for expanded engagement there, although we believe the international response should be more robust. The African Union, which has agreed to lead that effort, must have the unswerving support of the international community. Canada is offering $20 million to assist, and we call on others to join in now.

(*spoke in English*)

It is good that the international community is finally moving, but it has taken far too long. The Security Council has been bogged down in debating the issue. It has looked at whether Darfur is a threat to international peace and security. It is considering whether the tragedy qualifies as genocide, because either could provide justification, under international law, for intervention. The fact is, though, that, while the international community struggles with definitions, the people of Darfur struggle with disaster. They are hungry, they are homeless, they are sick, and many have been driven out of their own country. Tens of thousands have been murdered, raped and assaulted. War crimes and crimes against humanity are being committed.

We must not let debates about definitions become obstacles to action. We should not have to go through such painful exercises to figure out how to respond to humanitarian catastrophe. We need clear principles that will allow the international community to intervene much faster in situations like the one in Darfur.

Our common humanity should be a powerful enough argument, and yet that is precisely what is missing. Put simply, there is still no explicit provision in international law for intervention on humanitarian grounds. The "responsibility to protect" is intended to fill that gap. It says that we should have the legal right to intervene in a country on the grounds of humanitarian emergency alone. We should be able to do so when the Government of a country is unwilling or unable to protect its people from extreme harm as a result of internal war, repression or, simply, State failure.

The primary responsibility for the protection of a State's own population lies with that State itself. We are not arguing for a unilateral right to intervene in one country whenever another country feels like it. It is always preferable to have multilateral authority for intervention in the affairs of a sovereign State. What we seek is the evolution of international law and practice so that multilateral action may be taken in situations of extreme humanitarian emergency.

International law is moving in the right direction. Existing instruments such as the Convention on Genocide and human rights treaties acknowledge States' obligations to their own people. The establishment of the International Criminal Court and criminal tribunals are further steps forward. Thus customary international law is evolving to provide a solid basis in the building of a normative framework for collective humanitarian intervention. To speed it along, however, Member States should now adopt a General Assembly resolution recognizing the evolution of sovereignty to encompass the international responsibility to people. In turn, the Security Council should establish new thresholds for when the international community judges that civilian populations face extreme threats; and for exploring non-military and, if necessary, proportionate military options to protect civilians. The responsibility to protect is not a license for intervention; it is an international guarantor of political accountability.

The second area I would speak to is the "responsibility to deny", which encompasses the need to ensure that weapons of mass destruction do not under any circumstances spread to States or terrorists prepared to use them, especially against innocent civilians. Non-proliferation and disarmament remain fundamental pillars of the commitment of the United Nations to international peace and security.

In both cases, multilateralism has been challenged by dramatic changes in the security climate, and there is a clear need to make our systems stronger and more responsive. Strict verification is the key.

The United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, needs stronger tools, and it needs political support. We need more rigorous controls on sensitive nuclear technology, and the Security Council must be prepared to deal with non-compliance effectively. The fact is that, as we all know, determined proliferators have been able to circumvent their treaty obligations. The United Nations should establish a permanent inspection and verification mechanism that can reinforce and supplement existing verification systems.

More generally, and to show how far we have to go on the disarmament agenda, and on the responsibility to deny, the Conference on Disarmament, charged with the responsibility for negotiating new multilateral instruments, has not even been able to agree on a work plan since 1998. Surely the Conference must get back to productive work.

(*spoke in French*)

The third area is the "responsibility to respect" human beings, their dignity, their freedom and their culture. I would like to talk about a broader notion of human rights - one that can encompass individual rights, the protection of collective rights and pluralism, as reflected in the concept of cultural diversity. In fact, the United Nations Development Programme's recent *Human Development Report* stresses that cultural diversity is also tied in with freedom. That is why we support a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization instrument on cultural promotion.

Since the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, humanity has made remarkable strides in the area of human rights. Conventions are now in place to protect a number of rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural. But we must remain vigilant in the face of new forms of abuse, such as international trafficking of people and the horrifying child sex trade.

In addition to the protections afforded individual rights, various conventions have also been concluded to better protect minorities, to denounce racial discrimination and to combat marginalization. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the most divisive conflicts result, more often than not, from attempts by one group to prevent other groups from realizing their perfectly legitimate economic, religious, social or political aspirations. Entire communities are threatened. Violence, civil strife and even failed States ensue. Kosovo, Bosnia, the Great Lakes region in Africa, and today Darfur are the most chilling examples. The international community must take vigorous action to protect individuals as well as minority communities. It is not enough to simply possess various legal instruments; they must be put into practice. Institutions responsible for human rights must reveal to the entire world those guilty of abuse — be they armed groups, communities or Governments — and take the necessary measures. The United Nations is our moral conscience and it is up to us to act.

The fourth area is the responsibility to build. The objectives of the Millennium Summit on poverty, disease and global insecurity will come to naught if we do not follow up on the Monterrey Consensus, according to which genuine development requires a holistic approach to such issues as debt, market access and social investment.

That being said, as we have seen in Haiti over the past 10 years, all the aid in the world will have only a fleeting effect if a country does not have functioning public institutions. We must build countries' governance capacities and take the time to do it right. The same is true for economic institutions. Those that work well marshal the creative energies of local entrepreneurs. That is the message of the United Nations Commission on the Private Sector and Development: a thriving economy is the product of citizens' trust in their country's public institutions. In brief, development depends on governance.

Lastly, there is responsibility for the future, which is to say the obligation we have to leave a better world for our children. That is no small challenge. It involves all aspects of our common heritage: health, the environment, oceans, space. The new pandemics demand our most urgent attention. AIDS, SARS and the Ebola virus are sounding a terrifying alarm, but scientists are predicting even worse diseases. The World Health Organization must bolster its surveillance systems. It must do a better job coordinating its actions with those of other United Nations bodies.

Beyond health issues lies the whole question of managing our environment. It is gravely threatened. Only international cooperation and technical assistance can bring lasting solutions to such problems as access to clean air and water. Furthermore, we need an oceans policy that allows us to rebuild our fish stocks. Access to fisheries must be better regulated under international law. Simply put, the pillage of those global resources must stop.

Space is our final frontier. It has always captured our imagination. What a tragedy it would be if space became one big weapons arsenal and the scene of a new arms race. In 1967, the United Nations agreed that weapons of mass destruction must not be based in space. The time has come to extend that ban to all weapons.

(*spoke in English*)

I have talked today about responsibilities. In conclusion, let me mention one more: the responsibility to act. We await the report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel and we anticipate substantial recommendations for reform. Many countries are focused on the Security Council and we should support reforms that will make it more effective and will permit those countries which actively support United Nations peacekeeping, development and other activities to continue to have a meaningful opportunity to serve.

But we must also look forward to recommendations that go well beyond the Security Council. For example, there is a need to set out measures to facilitate an integrated response to the diverse range of security challenges that each of us faces, from the proliferation of terrorism to improving United Nations coordination on development, health and the environment. As individual countries, as individual members of regional organizations, and as participants in various international groups that form around specific interests, we all must act to bridge the differences that divide us and to forge an international consensus for reform of the United Nations.

In another context, for instance, Canada has proposed a special meeting at which leaders from 20 or so countries in the developed and developing worlds would get together to discuss our collective challenges and responsibilities. This could very well include providing a major boost to United Nations reform efforts.

In any event, no matter how one comes at it, the time has come for real reform of the United Nations. All of us in this Hall and in our respective Governments must put aside narrow interests and work to common purpose to strengthen this universal institution, whose activities give force to our common humanity.

Four years ago, at the Millennium Summit, the leaders of the world agreed that "we have a duty ... to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable" (*resolution 55/2, para. 2*). That duty will not be discharged unless we as Governments speak to the dignity and to the freedom of every human being on Earth, here at the world's meeting place of nations.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Canada for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Issam Fares, Deputy Prime Minister of Lebanon.

Mr. Fares (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the head of Lebanon's delegation to the General Assembly, I am pleased to congratulate Mr. Ping on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I wish him success in his presidency. I also want to acclaim the special relationship that my country has with his and to express our gratitude for the support which his country, Gabon, gives to our large Lebanese community working there and enjoying its hospitality.

I also wish to thank his predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his effective leadership as President of the Assembly at the fifty-eighth session.

Secretary-General Annan has earned our respect and appreciation for the efforts he has made to further the United Nations goal of working for a just, secure and peaceful world.

In past years, we in Lebanon used to come to this forum seeking United Nations help. The United Nations has always come to our support, adopting resolutions affirming Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We must express our gratitude to the United Nations for dispatching the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, stationed on our frontiers with Israel, and for the continuing and effective aid we get from the Organization's specialized agencies.

Today, we come to this forum with a different objective. Our country is in good shape. It has regained its position in the region. We have moved from destruction to construction, from rule by the militias to the rule of law, from anarchy to stability and security, and from division to unity. In the 1970s and 1980s, "Lebanonization" became a bad word. It stood for anarchy and infighting. Now, however, "Lebanonization" has regained its true, original meaning as a term standing for democracy, freedom, pluralism and recognition of the other.

Early this month, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1559 (2004), concerning Lebanon. The resolution has two dimensions, one regional, the other internal. As for the regional dimension, the resolution calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces still in Lebanon. There are Israeli forces occupying part of Lebanon: the Sheba'a farms and the surrounding area. Together with the rest of the Assembly, we call for the immediate withdrawal of those forces. From this rostrum, we also call upon Israel to halt its daily violations of our airspace.

There are also Syrian forces in Lebanon. Those forces are on our territory at the request of the Lebanese Government and in accordance with agreements signed by the two parties. Lebanon will accept the presence of those troops as long as the security situation in the region merits it. It is Lebanon's policy that not a single non-Lebanese soldier should remain on its soil. Our disagreement with the United Nations concerning the withdrawal of Syrian forces lies in the timing of the withdrawal; it is not a disagreement on the principle of withdrawal. The timing is under continuous discussion between the Lebanese and Syrian Governments; it will depend on their assessment of the security situation in the region. It is also the policy of Lebanon to support the national resistance movement, which played an important role in forcing Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon.

As for the Council's resolution's internal dimension — relating to the amendment of our Constitution — we consider it an unacceptable intervention in our internal affairs. Our Constitution, which was promulgated in 1926, may be the oldest democratic constitution in the entire Middle East. Successive Lebanese Parliaments have amended it many times, always in accordance with its own amendment mechanisms and by absolute majorities.

Lebanon is a civilized democratic country. It abides by international law and reveres the moral principles and values on which it is based. My country was a founding Member of the United Nations in 1945. It played a leading role in the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. And, from this rostrum, Lebanon has exposed and opposed all destructive and disruptive ideologies and movements that we felt impeded the course of civilization and the future of humanity.

Today, we stand together with the United Nations in opposing international terrorism in all its forms. Lebanon has witnessed the horrors of terrorism on its soil; it has witnessed innocent people being kidnapped, tortured and killed. It knows what terrorism is all about, and, as a result of first-hand knowledge, it condemns it in the strongest terms. We also condemn those who wilfully confuse terrorism with the struggle for national liberation and independence. There are those who exploit the universal revulsion against terrorism to smear national liberation movements by branding them as terrorist. National liberation is a right and an honour; terrorism is a crime and cowardice.

Lebanon has recovered its stability and freedom. We are not here to ask anything specific for ourselves. We do, however, ask that the United Nations devote more attention to our region. The region is in turmoil, and it looks to the United Nations to help establish peace. The Organization has been granted legitimacy by all nations in its quest to ensure peace and stability.

We ask the following of the United Nations. First, the Organization should increase its efforts to solve the Middle East problem. It should do so by implementing its resolutions concerning Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967, by giving the Palestinians an independent sovereign State and by ensuring the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland. The more the Middle East conflict is allowed to fester, the more difficult it will be to resolve and the more danger and war there will be in the region.

Secondly, the United Nations should assume greater responsibility in resolving the violent conflict in Iraq and in restoring peace, stability and unity to the Iraqis. The Iraqis have suffered greatly, and they deserve strong and continuing support from the United Nations so that they can build a free, just and democratic order.

Thirdly, the Organization should help the Middle East region to achieve a new stable order based on just and equitable solutions and on the right to self-determination, since that region is the birthplace of the three monotheistic religions. The United Nations should also put an end to the arms race and to the waste of capabilities and rid the region of weapons of mass destruction.

Fourthly, the United Nations should encourage the establishment of civil organizations as a necessary first step in the process of reform and democratization. It is difficult to build an accountable democratic system without diverse and pluralistic civil institutions. Democracy is based on political parties, trade unions, civil institutions, humanitarian organizations and associations of all kinds, which are the foundations of reform and democracy.

Lebanon has a clear vision about the future of the region and of its civilization. It wants to play a decisive role in that future, as it did in forging an Eastern civilization in the region, based on the most profound principles of Christianity and Islam.

Lebanon is an international country, bigger than its size and population, due to its emigrants, who inhabit every nook and cranny of the world. Wherever they may be, the Lebanese are emissaries of innovation and production. Some countries may take pride in exporting weapons and in deploying armies, but Lebanon, since the dawn of history, has prided itself on exporting its precious young people, who, in all continents, assume the highest posts in universities, research centres, industries and businesses.

Lebanon supports the United Nations because of its universal views on humanity and its future. In the past, my country may have suffered precisely because of its universalism, its openness and its freedom. Because Lebanon has given much, Lebanon deserves much.

Finally, I wish the General Assembly and its Main Committees every success in addressing the many important items on the agenda. Lebanon will participate actively in all these proceedings, in any way that will help to attain the objectives of the United Nations and advance the universal cause of freedom and peace.

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.